

Tar Heels Aim for Conference Title

A much different team from last year, men's soccer looks to capture the ACC title for the second straight year.

By IAN GORDON
Assistant Sports Editor

The past, and all of its oft-mentioned and overstated accouterments, mean nothing now.

Despite the similarities between last season and this one, the past cannot bring the North Carolina men's soccer team a repeat journey to the ACC Tournament finals.

It cannot guarantee the No. 7 Tar Heels a dramatic, title-clinching overtime goal like the one they scored in 2000.

No, this year's UNC team has to carve its own niche and build its own history.

The first pages of North Carolina's 2001 postseason will be drafted tonight when second-seeded UNC (15-3, 4-2 in the ACC) takes on seventh-seeded N.C. State (4-14, 0-6) in an ACC Tournament first-round game at Historic Riggs Field in Clemson, S.C., at 5:30 p.m. The winner faces the victor of the Maryland-Clemson matchup Friday at 8 p.m.

"I don't think it's different," said sophomore midfielder Logan Pause, comparing his team's preparation for the postseason. "If you lose, you're done from here on out."

And though the stakes are the same and the circumstances are similar, the comparison between this year's UNC team and the previous edition of the Tar Heels is strained, at best.

A year ago, the Tar Heels entered the tournament as the top-seeded team on an 11-game winning streak. They were ranked No. 1 in some polls and had the nation's leading scorer, Chris Carrieri, leading the offensive charge.

This year, North Carolina's leading scorer is freshman Marcus Storey and defense is the team's focus.

"It just seems like it's different from last year when we had Carrieri scoring and had that offensive firepower," said senior back Chris Leitch.

Instead of blowing out their opponents, the Tar Heels have shut them out.

UNC has posted 10 shutouts, including seven in its last eight games. But it was the game in which North Carolina allowed a goal — a 4-2 loss to Wake Forest on Oct. 27 — that served as a wake-up call for the Tar Heels.

"After the game was like a gut check," Leitch said. "It made us realize we're not where we want to be. We still need to do some work."

Following the loss in Winston-Salem, the Tar Heels had to finish the season with two games against opponents ranked in the top 20. UNC beat Clemson and South Carolina with back-to-back 1-0 decisions to put themselves in position to be the No. 2 seed in the conference tourney.

Five Earn Postseason Honors

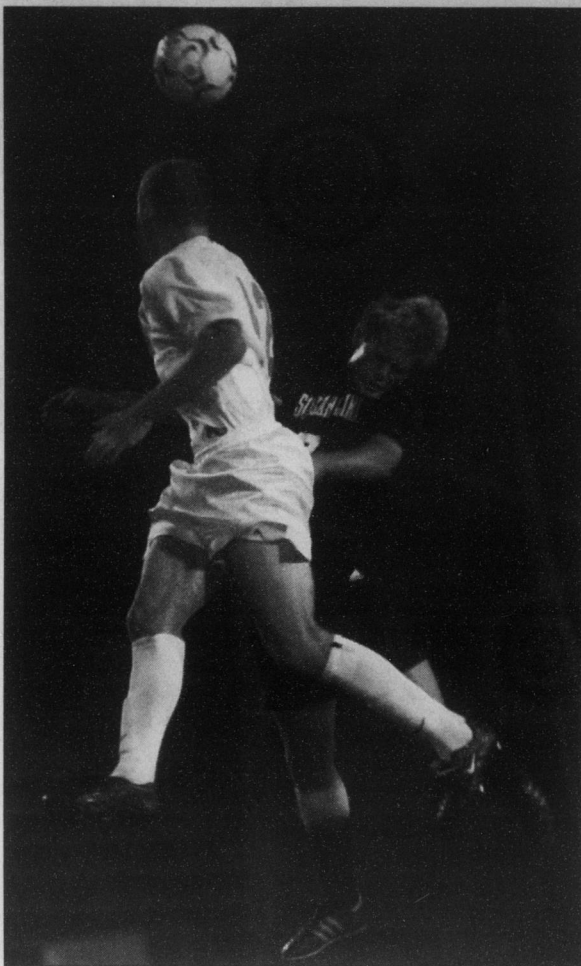
UNC senior defender Danny Jackson was named first-team All-ACC for the second year in a row, and Storey was tabbed as the conference's Rookie of the Year on Tuesday.

Leitch, Pause and forward Ryan Kneipper were all named second-team All-ACC performers.

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Senior defender Danny Jackson was named to the first-team All-ACC team for the second straight year.



Ryan Kneipper (left) earned second-team All-ACC Honors. The Tar Heels topped South Carolina 1-0 on Friday to end the regular season.

Women's Basketball Faces Tough Challenge

The Tar Heels tip off against No. 1 Connecticut at 7 p.m. Thursday for the third round of 2001 Preseason WNIT.

By BRAD BROTHERS
Assistant Sports Editor

Nikki Teasley has been there before. Teasley, a North Carolina guard, faced a daunting challenge as a freshman: playing at women's basketball mecca No. 1 Tennessee in the NCAA tournament.

The freshman learned the lesson of maintaining composure in a hostile environment that ended with a close 76-70 loss to end the Tar Heels' 1997-98 season.

Thursday night, UNC faces another No. 1, Connecticut, in another raucous arena — Gampel Pavilion — in the third round of the 2001 Preseason Women's National Invitational Tournament.

As North Carolina's only senior, Teasley provided advice to the freshmen that then-senior Tracey Reid once had given to her.

"I was definitely nervous," Teasley said of playing Tennessee. "I know Connecticut has a lot of fans. It's definitely frustrating — you can't hear the coaches. I was telling (the team) to stay focused and concentrate."

Concentration, however, is only the first step toward stopping the Huskies. UConn presents the Tar Heels with a lively starting five that are quick on the floor and extremely active on the boards.

UConn's offense is powered by a talented frontline of 6-foot-2 Tamika Williams, who has averaged 17.5 points and 8.0 rebounds in two early-season wins, and two other 6-2 forwards.

"They are very athletic," said UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell. "We are the underdogs going up there. All it can be

for us is a win-win situation. This game's not going to do anything but help us."

The player assigned to stop the Huskies inside is the Tar Heels' 6-6 center Candace Sutton.

Sutton will have to maintain her poise down low, because frontcourt teammate Chrystal Baptist is questionable with an ankle injury.

"I think we match up with them well," Sutton said. "We are quicker than we have been in previous years. It's just a matter of going up there and playing hard."

In the backcourt, UNC's three-guard set of Teasley, Coretta Brown and Leah Metcalf faces the other tough assignment. The trio must contain UConn's Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, who have combined to average 34.5 points this season.

But the Tar Heels are confident their perimeter players will cause matchup problems for UConn, rather than vice versa.

"I like it, because I'm not handling the ball all the time, getting pressured," Metcalf said. "We've got another guard in case they try to pressure me. I get to shoot more."

Teasley played the No. 1 before and lost. But she, like the team, is confident.

"This is something I've been waiting for since the Tennessee game my freshman year," Teasley said. "That one got away from us, I don't plan on letting this one get away from us."

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Sophomore forward Chrystal Baptist is questionable for Thursday's game after injuring her ankle this weekend.

In Unfamiliar Territory, Wrestling Looks to Shock ACC

By ADAM D. HILL
Staff Writer

By this time in November, the ACC wrestling world usually starts talking about North Carolina — and by how much the Tar Heels are favored to win the conference title.

This year, however, the talk isn't focused on the Tar Heels, and UNC coach Bill Lam and crew don't mind it at all.

"For the past 20 years, we've been picked to finish either No. 1 or No. 2 in the ACC preseason poll," Lam said. "This year, we weren't, but we kind of like this position. Now we are in a position to surprise a lot of people."

UNC will have a chance to see just what it can do this season when it travels to the East Stroudsburg Open this weekend.

"This weekend should really help us

know where we are," Lam said. "We need to wrestle other people, and after this we will have a better idea of where we are going."

UNC is picked to finish No. 3 this year, largely due to the team's youth and inexperience.

The Tar Heels lost perennial powers Corey Bell, Chuckie Connor, and JohnMark Bentley from last year's team that finished in a tie for the ACC title.

Moreover, UNC lost its assistant coach, T.J. Jaworsky, who took a head coaching job at Davidson. The Tar



Senior wrestler Brad Byers qualified for NCAAs in 1999 and 2000 in the 133-pound weight class.

Heels have filled that void with the hiring of C.D. Mock, a former ACC champion who left the world of business consulting to return to the UNC wrestling program.

To overcome the combination of loss and inexperience, the Tar Heels will look to a small core group of experienced wrestlers to lead the younger players.

"The leadership on this team is amazing," said Brad Byers, a 133-pound NCAA qualifier in 1999 and 2000.

"There is a great amount of enthusiasm here, and we are hoping that it can translate into success."

Lam expects the trio of Byers, Matt Kenny and Nick Richmond to lead the way for the Tar Heels on the mat.

Kenny, a senior heavyweight, has won ACC titles and qualified for the NCAA Tournament in his three seasons. The past two years, Kenny has come one win short of earning All-American status.

"We are glad to have Matt back and

are looking forward to him doing some great things this year," Lam said. "We are really expecting him to have a great year."

Another wrestler that has caught Lam's eye is one of UNC's three transfers, Chris Rodrigues. Rodrigues, who left Michigan, wrestles at 125 pounds and was a four-time state champion in high school.

"Chris is a fun kid to watch wrestle," Lam said. "He should make an impact

for this team."

Mark Canty, another newcomer, is making his mark on the squad through a mix of leadership and emotion on the mat.

"I think we are all meshing well," Canty said. "We have some new guys that can do some damage, and our anticipation is growing."

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