

Women's Golf Prepares Itself For Return to NCAA Success

By **BRANDON COWARD**
Staff Writer

The North Carolina women's golf team traveled to the other side of the world in the offseason, heading to Australia to hit the links and see the sights.

The team hopes to make a much shorter trip this spring: Auburn, Wash., to compete in the NCAA championships.

After finishing 15th in qualifying last year, UNC is hungry to return to national competition.

This year's Tar Heels have already worked their way to No. 23 in the nation and are poised to make a run at a top-10 spot and a berth in the NAAs.

"The fall season was the best season for the team since I've been here, and I think the spring will be even better," said junior Abby Spector.

With three top-10 finishes in its four fall tournaments, including a second-place finish at the Franklin Street Trust/Tar Heel Invitational in October, the team is making headway in its quest to return to NCAA competition.

Coach Sally Austin said the key to the team achieving its goals this spring lies in the continued success of its nucleus, consisting of seniors Beth Lever and Shelley McKeivitt, Spector and sopho-

more Ashley Prange.

The fifth spot likely will be occupied by either junior Meghan Adams or freshman Romi Irons.

Though Irons and many other younger players haven't seen much action this year, they still have been a vital part of the team effort.

"The younger players have been working very, very hard, and it's pushing the other kids to work hard," Austin said.

One method Austin has used to foster friendly competition has been games and drills for small prizes.

Another change from the fall has been an increase in team unity, which might be attributed to the trip Down Under.

"I think we've bonded a lot more as a team after coming back from Australia," Irons said. "I think the attitude of the team has become a lot more positive and upbeat."

UNC will have its first chance to shine this weekend at the Suntrust Lady Gator Invitational in Gainesville, Fla.

"We're anxious to get started," Austin said. "They've played a lot in qualifying and they've been practicing hard."

"I think now we're ready to put the pencil to the paper and see how we come out."

Tennis Slays Giants, Eyes Duke

By **RANDY WELLINGTON**
Staff Writer

It is the age of pressure in sports, especially in the tennis world. The philosophy is almost axiomatic: If you're scared to lose, you're more likely to win.

So to see Jen Callen, the first-year coach of North Carolina's women's tennis team, use a coaching style that emphasizes effort and cohesion over winning is almost as remarkable as her results.

The Tar Heels are ranked No. 10 in the nation, and they have beaten three teams ranked in the top 15.

And oddly enough, they are enjoying the journey, not worrying about the possible destination — an ACC championship.

"I focus on process goals over outcome goals," Callen said.

Callen developed her coaching strategy at Dartmouth, where she coached the previous two years, compiling a 17-20 record.

At UNC, she replaced Roland Thornqvist, who became head coach of the women's team at Florida after lead-

ing the Tar Heels to three straight NCAA tournament appearances.

The transition has been smooth.

"We have definitely embraced the change," junior Marlene Mejia said.

Mejia was All-America last season. She would be ranked in the top 10 in the nation, but the rankings are based on the fall



Junior tennis player **Marlene Mejia** returned to UNC's No. 1 singles spot Jan. 26 after missing the fall season.

season, which she missed with tendonitis in her shoulder.

She returned to her No. 1 singles spot on Jan. 26 with a win against Richmond.

"I'm just trying to improve and stay healthy," Mejia said. "If I do that, the results will come."

The two nationally ranked players on the team are Julie Rotondi (No. 41) and Kate Pinchbeck (No. 37).

Pinchbeck is also a captain and said

she appreciates her new coach's style.

"It's been different," Pinchbeck said. "We are less uptight this year, more relaxed."

She and co-captain Caroline Hill have played an important role in facilitating the change as well.

"Our captains have been phenomenal," Callen said, "They've given so much effort, every single day."

Amid all the mutual adoration, one fact remains: the team is thriving.

After starting 3-0 against UNC-Greensboro, Richmond and N.C. State, the Tar Heels played in the ITA National Team Indoor Championships in Madison, Wis.

With wins against Fresno State and Notre Dame, both ranked in the top 15 at the time, North Carolina proved itself a national force.

The one taint to the weekend was a loss to Duke, ranked second in the nation.

"Everyone was down," Pinchbeck said. "It was hard because Duke is our big rival. And we really felt we were there."

When the two teams meet again in Durham on April 14, the ACC championship could be on the line.

But Callen said she cares more about the present than being president.

She said, "All I can ask is that they give their all, every day."

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KATE PINCHBECK
Junior Co-captain

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