

UNC Defense Harasses Opponents in 5-0 Start

By IAN GORDON
Senior Writer

To get itself started, it first had to stop its opponents.

With its 5-0 start and Preseason NIT victory, the North Carolina men's basketball team looks entirely different from the squad that stumbled to 1-4 a year ago.

The Tar Heels' new identity is apparent in their youth and athleticism, but UNC has started strong because of its ability to shut down opposing offenses.

After allowing its opponents to make more than 45 percent of their field goals in 2001-02, North Carolina has used a staunch half-court man-to-man defense in which quickness is key to hold opponents to 34.6 percent from the field this season.

"The quickness is number one," said UNC coach Matt Doherty. "We spend more time in practice on the defensive side." So far, the practice has paid off. The Tar Heels harried then-No. 2 Kansas into 21 turnovers and held the Jayhawks to 40.7 percent shooting.

Two days later, UNC forced Stanford to turn the ball over 21 times and shoot just 33.9 percent from the floor.

"They're really playing to their athletic ability," said Illinois coach Bill Self, whose team hosts the Tar Heels at 9:30 p.m. today in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge.

Sophomore guard Jackie Manuel has been the standard-bearer of UNC's defensive revival. Manuel frequently has been assigned to opponents' best scorers, and he held Rutgers' Jerome Coleman to 2-of-18 shooting Nov. 20.

But Doherty also praised the play of

Jawad Williams, a lithe 6-foot-8 1/2 forward who played well in New York City.

"I joke with Jawad that he didn't know how to get in a defensive stance his freshman year," Doherty said.

Now, few would say that about the Tar Heels. Instead of reacting on the defen-

sive end, they're making things happen.

"This is a really get-after-you type team that wants to create havoc," Self said, "and get you out of what you want to do."

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.

THE LOWDOWN ON TONIGHT'S GAME

No. 12 UNC (5-0) vs. No. 25 Illinois (3-0)

PROBABLE STARTERS

UNC
C: Sean May, 6-8
F: Jawad Williams, 6-8 1/2
F: Rashad McCants, 6-4
G: Jackie Manuel, 6-5
G: Raymond Felton, 6-0 1/2

Illinois
C: Nick Smith, 7-2
F: Brian Cook, 6-10
F: Roger Powell, 6-6
G: Deron Williams, 6-3
G: Dee Brown, 6-0

Game: No. 12 North Carolina at No. 25 Illinois
Time: Tuesday, 9:30 p.m.
Location: Assembly Hall
Radio: 100.7 FM, WCHL-1360 AM
Television: ESPN2
Keys for UNC: Keep up the defensive pressure. The Tar Heels took the nation by surprise and won the Preseason NIT. The key to their success? Tough-nosed man-to-man defense with plenty of help in the post. That type of effort will be necessary against Illinois' quick but inexperienced backcourt and the versatile Brian Cook, a rangy forward who scored 17 points against Western Illinois on Sunday. "He shoots the ball like a guard," said UNC coach Matt Doherty. "When he's open, there's no hesitation."
Keys for Illinois: Stay in its offense. UNC's last two opponents, Kansas and Stanford, each struggled to play within itself when facing the Tar Heels' half-court 'D.' Freshman point guard Dee Brown (5.3 assists per game) needs to find Cook early and often to let the big man go to town against the Tar Heels shorter defenders.
UNC Bench: Melvin Scott has emerged as a solid contributor. Although he's a 2-guard, he ably spelled Felton in New York City and can put up quick points.
Illinois Bench: Guard Luther Head can score in a hurry and is averaging 11 per game. Fresh forward James Augustine is averaging nine points a game and more than seven boards a contest.
Prediction: Illinois 79, UNC 75

COMPILED BY IAN GORDON

Ramsey Perfects Offensive Niche

By KELLIE DIXON
Assistant Sports Editor

About a month ago, something changed in the way Alyssa Ramsey navigates the soccer field.

It wasn't her speed. She still claims to have a sluggish acceleration rate followed by a constant speedy pace. And the change had little to do with the Justin Timberlake tunes she pops in the CD player in preparation for most of North Carolina's games.

Instead, the junior forward has noticed a shift in her mobility, putting her where she needs to be at the optimal moment.

"And because of that, I think I'm getting the ball more often, which is giving me the opportunity to make more things happen," Ramsey said. "I don't know. I don't think it was just a switch that one day I decided to turn on. About the time we played Wake Forest, right before the ACC Tournament, is about when it happened."

"Ever since then, I've just continued doing it. I don't know where it came from, but I'm glad I decided to become more mobile because obviously things are starting to happen."

Obviously.
In NCAA Tournament play alone this season, Ramsey has scored three goals and had two assists. Her 17 goals lead the team, while her 12 assists place second, just behind Susan Bush and Lindsay Tarpley, both of whom are tied at 15.

Last week was no different for Ramsey, and at the close of UNC's quarterfinal match against Texas A&M on Friday the junior had earned two goals and one assist. Her goals lifted the Tar Heels to a Final Four game against Santa Clara.

After that matchup, the lights dimmed on Fetzer Field and a few of the Tar Heels lingered, socializing with friends and family.

Senior Leslie Gaston jokingly

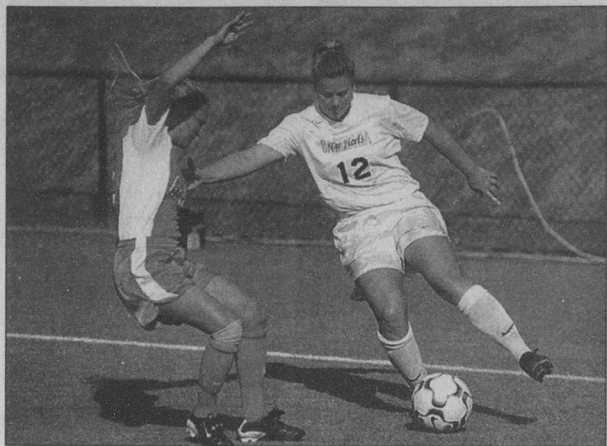


PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE MULLINIX

UNC forward Alyssa Ramsey (12) fends off a Clemson defender in the ACC Championship game. Ramsey leads UNC in scoring with 17 goals.

bumped into Ramsey, calling the 5-foot-9 forward a bully.

"She's a bully because she beats up on me all the time," Gaston said. "Any chance she gets. She kicks balls at me as hard as she can. She tries to pick me up and throw me on my head."

Ramsey grinned but added a reassuring, "Leslie instigates it, don't worry."

Joking aside, Gaston said Ramsey's presence up top gives her a sense of confidence.

"I love having the ball at Alyssa's feet because I know that when she takes a shot on goal it's going to be a very placed shot," Gaston said.

Ramsey's placement has been tested both in and outside of conference play.

"She's always been an extraordinary finisher," said North Carolina women's soccer coach Anson Dorrance. "She doesn't shoot enough in my opinion, but

when she shoots, it's not an accident."

Ramsey proved how deadly her accuracy can be in Friday's bout with the Aggies, when she notched a goal in the first 22 seconds of the game. Although the goal was the result of a team effort, it was Ramsey who put on the finishing touches.

However, Dorrance said what's impressed him hasn't necessarily been Ramsey's accuracy.

"The thing I like about what she's done this year is she's added pieces to her game," Dorrance said. "She's become very good in the air. She's learning to use her strength better in tackles and in holding the ball. She's becoming a better defensive presence, and I think she's evolving into a more sophisticated and more well-rounded player."

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.

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Green Back, Better Than Ever After Rehabilitation Struggles

By DANIEL BLANK
Staff Writer

It is not pretty watching Aletha Green try to run during drills. An exaggerated limp to favor her surgically repaired left leg breaks any fluidity in her stride.

But seeing Green's constant improvement and consistent production for the North Carolina women's volleyball team this season has been a thing of beauty.

The impact that Green, a junior who is starting for the first time in her career, has

made on the team is evidenced on the ACC leaderboards. She is sixth in the conference in blocking and second in hitting percentage, helping UNC place second and third, respectively, in those categories.

"She's had a good attitude about practicing hard and trying to get it done," UNC coach Joe Sagula said. "She produced good results, and it's been hard to get her off the court."

But there were times last year when many — especially Green — didn't expect her to be on the court at all.

Green had off-season surgery in which a steel rod was inserted in her left tibia to relieve the pressure of a stress fracture.

She said she first felt pain in the leg last September but didn't receive an official diagnosis until January, after playing a full season.

There are still obvious remnants from that surgery. She has yet to regain most of her foot speed and still can not jump off her left foot.

Green said there were several occasions during the difficult rehabilitation period when she wanted to quit.

"I was a bitter rehabber," Green said. "I was like, 'I don't know why I'm rehabbing, I'm not going to be back. Why are you making me do this?'"

Green said she persevered because her teammates supported her throughout the process, even when she was the only one not running sprints in practice. She also had Holly Strauss, who was recuperating from reconstructive ankle surgery, to struggle through rehab with.

But she said her biggest influence was her roommate, Summer Knowles of the track team. Green said she was motivated by watching Knowles' constant training to recover from ACL surgery.

"I had a change of heart during the rehab," Green said. "It was encouraging just to know that it was possible. I'm not even supposed to be playing right now; I'm not supposed to be starting; I'm not supposed to be having a great season. I'm really, truly blessed."

Green's persistence has paid off this year. She already has appeared in twice as many games as she did last year, and her attack percentage has rocketed up by more than 200 points.

"She's always been this good," Strauss said. "She just hasn't believed it, and I think this year it just sparked, and she's been doing a phenomenal job in the middle."

Sagula, who called Green the most improved player on the team, said the team (31-3, 16-2 in the ACC) will need the consistent play it has received from Green all year to make a run in the NCAA Tournament, which starts Thursday.

"We're going to need solid blocking, is the first thing, and to give us some key swings and points," Sagula said. "High-percentage offense — she doesn't have to have 10 or 15 kills."

Green said she is ready to finally make her mark in the postseason.

"This has been a long three years, and to finally be in this position, starting, playing, and being able to make an impact — I'm just excited."

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CAMPUS RECREATION UPDATE

Intramural Sports

Congratulations...

Turkey Trot Winners!

Women's Fac/Staff (1st-3rd): Katie Brown(21:17) Lauren Mangili(22:18) Meg Lanchantini(25:26)	Women's Student(1st-3rd): Katie Anthony(18:50) Jessica Woodrow(19:10) Emily Cupito(19:11)
Men's Fac/Staff(1st-2nd): Mark Turner(18:13) Charles Vanderhorst(18:35)	Men's Student(1st-3rd): Rob Robertson(15:27) Brian McGovern(15:28) Matt Jameson(16:25)

Upcoming Intramurals:

- BASKETBALL • 5 Players
Sign-up: Jan. 6-Jan. 14
- GRAIL VOLLEYBALL • 6 Players
ARENA FOOTBALL • 6 Players
Sign-up: Jan. 13-21

Sign-up for ALL Sports/Events in 203 Woolen Gym.
For more info go to www.campusrec.unc.edu.

Sport Clubs

UNC Sport Clubs
1st Annual Cardboard Boat Race
(Spring 2003)

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Stay tuned for more details on this exciting event in future DTH ads!

For more information contact Angie, amarfisi@email.unc.edu

Carolina Adventures

at the OEC

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Description: Highest peak east of the Rockies!
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Student/Staff: \$120/160
Spaces Left: 9
Questions: 962-4179/ dyeagan@email.unc.edu or go to <http://www.campusrec.unc.edu/OEC/trips.html>.

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