

# Youth to drive UNC field hockey resurgence

BY BRANDON COWARD  
STAFF WRITER

The North Carolina field hockey team returns for the 2003 season with a new look after suffering its first losing season since 1981 and missing the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1982.

"I think last year was a humbling experience for us," said Coach Karen Shelton. "I think we responded appropriately, and we will prove that as the season goes on."

While UNC has no seniors returning for the upcoming season, they still have seven experienced juniors including Carey Fetting-Smith, Kerry Falgowski and Kelsey Keeran complemented by one of the best recruiting classes in the nation.

The Tar Heels also will get a boost from redshirt freshman Brooke Miller and returning sophomore Naomi Weatherald.

Shelton almost played Miller

toward the end of the season last year but decided it would be better for Miller to retain her redshirt status.

"We're delighted that we red-shirted Brooke," Shelton said. "She's a force, and she's going to be good for four more years."

Weatherald, who garnered All-ACC Tournament honors last year, returns as a team captain and the defensive leader.

While an absence of seniors is normally seen as a drawback, the team views it as an opportunity for everyone to step up and take charge.

"I think in every class you can see people stepping up to fill those roles," said Fetting-Smith. "I think that's definitely one of our strong points. As a unit, we're able to be cohesive because it is open to everyone to step up and fill that role."

The lack of seniors has supplied

the incoming octet of freshmen with a chance to perform right away instead of waiting for their sophomore years.

Three newcomers — Laree Beans, Rachel Dawson and Ashley Judge — are projected to jump immediately into starting positions.

"I think that potentially we could have three freshmen starting," Shelton said. "I think the combination of our returning players and these freshmen make for a good and balanced team."

Though they are the most visible on the field, the freshmen aren't the only new additions to the North Carolina roster.

The Tar Heels recruited four new members to the assistant coaching staff, including three-time Olympian Jackie Pereira, former Tar Heel standout Cindy Werley, recent graduate Meredith Keller and administrative assistant

Shelley Johnson.

Pereira and Werley were brought in mainly to focus on the forwards, while Keller works with the midfielders and Shelton and returning assistant Jana Withrow fine-tune the backfield.

The team also added Johnson as an administrative assistant to help make practices more efficient and organized.

After last year's losing season, the changes the Tar Heels made give the team a renewed positive outlook.

"After having had a tough season, we've been down that road, and that's not where we belong," Fetting-Smith said. "We knew it was wrong. We are a top team that had some bad luck last year. This year, it's payback time."

Contact the Sports Editor at [sports@unc.edu](mailto:sports@unc.edu).



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The North Carolina field hockey team, flush with youth, failed to reach the NCAA Tournament last season for the first time since 1982.

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## Sophomore captain aided by Australian toughness

BY WILL ROBINSON  
STAFF WRITER

Naomi Weatherald is no stranger to being the center of attention.

At Immanuel College in Adelaide, South Australia, she was her field hockey team's most outstanding player and her school's Sportswoman of the Year, a premium accolade considering Australia's higher level of competition in the sport.

Then last season, she became the first Australian to play field hockey for North Carolina coach Karen Shelton and surprised many by making the All-ACC Tournament team as a freshman.

And this year, in the absence of senior leadership, she will represent her team as a sophomore captain along with junior Carey Fetting-Smith.

Weatherald isn't your typical second-year Division I athlete — in addition to being a year older than her sophomore teammates, she also

is more battle-tested than the average American field hockey player.

"It's more a sign of respect since I'm a bit older and I come from a different background," Weatherald said. "In America, people start field hockey at a later age than they do in Australia, so reading the game isn't necessarily a strong asset of the Americans because they haven't been brought up with it."

Considering her knowledge of the game, notable athleticism and calmness under pressure, it's no surprise that her teammates trusted her with a leadership role.

"She's poised, she's calm and she doesn't freak out or go nuts on people on the field," said sophomore goalkeeper Katy Tran. "She's definitely a natural leader."

Weatherald's situation as an international field hockey player isn't unusual at UNC. On the field, she joins junior Laura Douglas of New Zealand and sophomore Karen Mann of British Columbia. On the bench, she receives encour-

agement from Australian Jackie Pereira, a three-time Olympian who is in her first season as a Tar Heel assistant coach.

In a sport in which leg bruises, ice bags and black eyes are commonplace, the toughness of experienced international players is welcomed with open arms, especially with North Carolina trying to bounce back from its first losing season since 1981.

But Weatherald doesn't feel added pressure from the program's history and even thinks the team might have better chemistry without seniors.

"I think not having a senior can be more beneficial because more girls step up into leadership roles and we've bonded better," Weatherald said. "The girls are a lot happier — if you're happy and enjoying your hockey, you're going to play better."

Contact the Sports Editor at [sports@unc.edu](mailto:sports@unc.edu).

## NOTEBOOK

### Position battles rage on for UNC

BY AARON FITT  
SENIOR WRITER

Just four days before the North Carolina football team hosts Florida State to open the season, the Tar Heels still have several starting jobs up for grabs.

"Question marks still remain at wide receiver, and, to an extent, running back and backup tight end," said UNC Coach John Bunting Tuesday at his weekly press conference. "There are still question marks at who's the strong safety, who's the backup corners and what rotation will we use, if any, against Florida State."

One of the most intriguing battles has been at the running back position, where injuries and competition have rendered depth charts obsolete weekly.

A thigh bruise sidelined junior Jacque Lewis from practice last week and caused him to fall to third on the depth chart, behind senior Willie Parker and junior Chad Scott. Freshman Ronnie McGill, star of the spring football game, is currently fourth on the depth chart.

"I see all four playing," Bunting said. "I see them playing different roles during the course of this game. It probably will have something to do with down, distance and personnel. Willie Parker I see as our number one back right now."

Lewis is 95-percent healthy now, Bunting said. In order to keep him as injury-free as possible, Lewis will play on fewer special teams than last year. Bunting said he plans only to use Lewis on the punt team.

Lewis' injury is one reason Parker was able to seize the top spot, but not the only reason. Bunting said Parker has made two important changes.

"Number one is durability," Bunting said. "Number two is his ability to see the cutback or see the inside running lane and take it as opposed to stuttering prior to hitting the hole. See it and hit it, and that's different (from last year)."

Another battle is raging for playing time at wide receiver. Jarwarski Pollock and Derrele Mitchell figure to be the starters Saturday, with Brandon Russell and Danny Rumley as the backups. But the latter two are feeling pressure from freshmen Jesse Holley, Mike Mason and Adarius Bowman.

Quarterback Darian Durant has yet to find his go-to target, partly because so many different receivers are getting reps.

"They're doing a lot of rotating, so it's still kind of hard to get into a rhythm with certain guys, but I'm not worried," Durant said. "If they can get open, I'll get them the ball. But at the same time, there has to be a guy that you feel like you can go to when it's crunch time, and I don't think I've yet found that guy."

Some players have distinguished themselves to Bunting during camp. He rewarded two of them Tuesday, announcing that kicker Topher Roberts and snapper Greg Warren would get scholarships.

"Roberts will continue to do kickoffs," Bunting said. "He has a year left of school, and we will reward him with a scholarship. That's fun to do. Believe me, you don't know how much fun that is to do."

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