



MICHAEL CLARKE
TRADE FODDER

Panthers not letting fans down

When the Carolina Panthers punted the ball with two minutes left in the fourth quarter of the Sept. 14 game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a sense of déjà vu and dread came over me.

"Not again," I groaned. How many times in the past, with a lead of a touchdown or less and the clock running down, had I seen the Panthers give the ball back to their opponent needing only a defensive stop to get the win and wind up spending the rest of my Sunday wandering around confused and angry, muttering profanities under my breath?

For example, last season in back-to-back games versus Arizona and Dallas, the Panthers had seen late fourth-quarter leads evaporate in the face of comeback drives engineered by Arizona's Jake Plummer and Dallas' Quincy Carter.

Carolina had perfected the art of losing close games. In 2001, the Panthers lost nine games by eight points or less.

So many times, I had seen the Panthers snatch defeat from the jaws of almost-certain victory.

The Panther defense, protecting a six-point lead against Tampa Bay, seemed helpless — haunted by the ghosts of innumerable fourth quarter meltdowns — as Bucs quarterback Brad Johnson orchestrated an 11-play, 82-yard drive for the tying touchdown in 1 minute, 49 seconds of game time.

"I knew it!" I shouted. I said to myself, how could I have expected my lowly Panthers to top the defending Super Bowl champion Buccaneers?

And then, the Panthers did something so un-Panther-like that I, for once, was at a loss for words. They made an unbelievable play at the end of the game and didn't lose.

With :05 left on the game clock, Tampa Bay kicker Martin Gramatica lined up to kick the game-winning extra point. The ball was snapped, Gramatica kicked it and his kick was blocked by mighty Panther defensive tackle Kris Jenkins.

"Who blocks an extra point?" I finally croaked after sitting dumfounded for a few seconds trying to process what had happened.

It didn't matter. The Panthers won the game in overtime on a 47-yard John Kasay field goal.

And they haven't looked back. The Panthers have already set the NFL record for most road overtime wins in a season with three. The other two came against Indianapolis, who was undefeated at the time, and New Orleans on the leg of the automatic Kasay, who hasn't missed a field goal or extra point all season.

Despite Sunday's upset loss to the Texans, the 2003 Panthers are a new team from years past. Instead of finding ways to lose at the end of games, this season they are finding ways to win.

This team shouldn't care about last season's eight-game losing streak or 2001's record-setting 15-game losing streak.

Now, this team is a winner. True, the Panthers received an ugly beating at the hands of the Tennessee Titans on Oct. 19. But that was a reality check for a young team that hadn't experienced losing since week 15 of last year.

With a 6-2 record, Carolina leads its division by two games over Tampa Bay, and unless something drastically unforeseeable happens, the Panthers will make the playoffs, something they haven't done since 1996.

After suffering through record-setting losing streaks and last-second losses too numerous to count, it seems that the Panthers have finally given me something to cheer about.

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UNC lackluster in exhibition

Felton scores 20, May OK after scare

BY JAMIE AGIN
SENIOR WRITER

It had all the signs of a pre-season split-squad scrimmage.

Errant passes and blown layups. Ambivalent cheerleaders and overwhelmed towel boys. A dissatisfied head coach and of course, a token scare involving a vital player.

It seems Dean Smith made the right move in bolting from his arena five minutes before tip-off.

For those interested, the White team, paced by Raymond Felton and Sean May, downed the Blue team 77-70 at the Smith Center on Sunday.

But rather than heaping praise on anybody, UNC coach Roy Williams focused on the mistakes of his team, which is ranked No. 10 in the preseason ESPN-USA Today coaches' poll.

"I think, when you put a whole

group of people in the stands, you tend to have a lot of game slippage," Williams said. "And the guys forget the things you work on in practice."

One of the team's biggest struggles was protecting the ball.

Despite running a slowed-down version of Williams' up-tempo offense — one that Jackie Manuel said would be 10 times faster by the start of the season — the Tar Heels committed 22 turnovers.

"We've had 13 practices," Williams said. "Needless to say, we're not ready to run the ball like I want to."

The team also made several mental lapses. Williams said that because of the 8,178 in the stands, he didn't stop play as often as he

would have liked to. But at one point, he couldn't resist.

In the second half, the shot clock expired without the Blue team taking a shot. A frustrated Williams immediately called a timeout.

"If I say 'Hey Jackie,' and I point, I'm not talking about the blonde in the 17th row," Williams joked.

On top of those troubles, the Tar Heels dodged a bullet involving May.

With 7:45 to play in the second half, May was involved in a collision at midcourt. He fell to the floor and, clutching his calf, dragged himself off the court. He spent the rest of the game on the bench with his leg taped.

"I'm fine," said May, who finished with 13 points and 10 rebounds. "I could have come back."

"I just didn't want to get hurt in

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Junior Jackie Manuel (right) attempts to steal the ball from sophomore Raymond Felton in Sunday's Blue-White game. Manuel had 26 points.

A GAME TO FORGET

McBrien shreds defense for 6 TDs

BY BRIAN MACPHERSON
SPORTS EDITOR

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — In retrospect, North Carolina probably should have negotiated a truce after the first quarter.

Two impressive red-zone stops and a 96-yard kickoff return for a

touchdown by freshman Mike Mason put the Tar Heels up 14-6 with 3:56

left in the opening frame and put them in good position, at the very least, to make Saturday's game competitive.

It didn't happen. Scott McBrien threw for 349 yards and four touchdowns — and rushed for two more — as Maryland dealt the Tar Heels a humiliating 59-21 defeat at Byrd Stadium.

"To go out there and play like that, I know it's disappointing to all of us," said freshman linebacker Larry Edwards. "Hopefully, in my time here, we'll never have a game like this again."

The game began with such promise for the Tar Heels (1-8, 0-5 in the ACC). Despite four straight long runs by Terp tailback Bruce Perry, a sack by Alden Blizzard forced Maryland to settle for a Nick Novak field goal.

Quarterback Darian Durant then directed a solid opening drive that culminated in a Chad Scott touchdown run from three yards out.

When a perfect McBrien pass once again landed the Terps (6-3, 3-2) in the red zone, the Tar Heels forced another field goal.

And when Mason fielded Novak's ensuing kickoff, faked a handoff to Derrick Johnson and outran the Maryland coverage team for a touchdown and a 14-6 North Carolina lead, the Tar Heels seemed to have solved the vaunted Maryland defense.

Even after McBrien scrambled into the end zone for Maryland's first touchdown of the game and a 14-14 tie, Scott took a Durant shovel pass for 52 yards and a touchdown behind terrific downfield blocking by wide receiver Jarwarski Pollock and tailback Jacque Lewis.

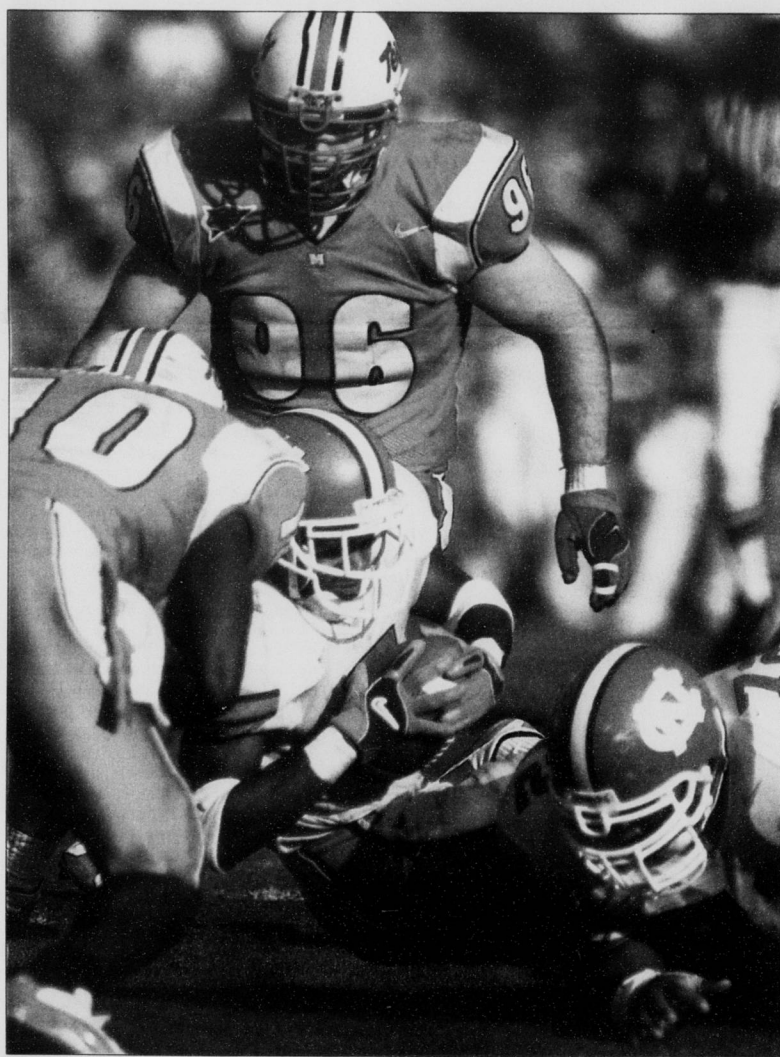
But that's when everything fell apart. "Momentum," Pollock said. "They got momentum, and they ran with it."

More specifically, Terp receiver Steve Suter ran with it. He took the ensuing kickoff to the UNC 33-yard line, and McBrien completed the short drive with a lofted pass to Latrez Harrison for a touchdown.

The game seemed to turn when the Terrapins forced North Carolina to punt for the first time in the game — with 6:54 left in the second quarter.

"We were watching film all week, and looking at their games previously, and we knew it was going to be a shootout because their offense is great, but people

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North Carolina wide receiver Jarwarski Pollock (5) secures the ball between Maryland free safety Madieu Williams (10) and tackle C.J. Feldheim. Pollock led the Tar Heels with 8 catches for 78 yards on Saturday.

BY THE NUMBERS

612

Maryland's total offense on Saturday, a Terp season high

39

Points scored by Maryland in 2nd quarter, an ACC record

4

Touchdowns for Terp quarterback Scott McBrien in 2nd quarter

Little sign of progress for Tar Heels' defense

Run and pass coverage abysmal in defeat

BY JACOB KARABELL
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The North Carolina defense's mantra all season has been about progress.

But after allowing an ACC-record 39 points in the second quarter of a 59-21 loss, any defensive progress was nonexistent.

In fact, the end result looked suspiciously like last season's 59-7 loss to the Terps in Chapel Hill instead of the past two weeks when the Tar Heel defense made impressive red-zone stops.

There was one key difference between the two games, however. Last year, Maryland scored six of its seven offensive touchdowns on runs by its backfield.

Saturday, it was UNC's secondary that the Terrapins' quarterback Scott McBrien exploited for four TDs, and he

ran for two more to total six on the afternoon.

Although Maryland didn't come in planning to pass instead of run, it knew one thing — it was going to put up a lot of offense against the porous North Carolina defense.

"We knew they were giving up 500 yards on offense every game," said Terp receiver Latrez Harrison. "We wanted our share of 500 yards too, so some way we had to go in there and get it."

And get it they did. Maryland ended up with 612 total yards in the game, with 360 of them coming through the air. North Carolina's defensive backs slipped, missed tackles and were out-sprinted routinely.

But no area of the defense was exempt from blame. UNC's defensive

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Perfect season secured with win

McDowell scores lone goal for UNC

BY CHRIS GILFILLAN
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Although it was Halloween night, the scariest thing to make an appearance wasn't the giant banana or the dozen witches in the Fetzer Field crowd on Friday.

Invoking more fear were the driving free kicks from Catherine Reddick.

Reddick had two blasts in the second half, although only one was put in for a goal by Mary McDowell. McDowell's goal was the game-winner in UNC's 1-0 win.

"The whole time of a (Reddick) free kick is terrifying for an opponent," said UNC coach Anson Dorrance. "I could feel the tension from the field on our bench. I'm sure there's a ball mark on the girl that got hit in the wall. Maybe a lifetime Nike tattoo."

With just fewer than 23 minutes left in a scoreless game, Reddick had a chance to pound a free kick to the Seminole goalkeeper. The ball went over the wall to the goalkeeper who blocked it out to a waiting Lindsay Tarpley, who immediately passed it to McDowell for the game-winning goal.

"It's scary, actually," forward Alyssa Ramsey said. "Anson's rule for Cat in practice is that if anybody gets hits in the wall by Cat, then they get to leave the wall. I think that pretty much shows what the team thinks about Cat."

Reddick had another booming free kick about five minutes later, though the No. 1 Tar Heels (18-0, 7-0 in the ACC) were unable to convert on it.

It was the strong play of Florida State goalkeeper Joy McKenzie, who finished with eight saves, that prevented UNC from scoring more than one goal.

The McDowell goal actually ended McKenzie's 739-minute

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