

Versatile Poitras excels

BY RACHEL SODER
STAFF WRITER

Senior diver Eric Poitras learned early what it took to be the best.

In his native Canada, Poitras was in a program in which he trained with some older, more talented divers at a young age because of the lack in depth of talent.

"I was more exposed to good divers at a younger age," Poitras said. "You can see what level you're trying to get to."

This experience helped Poitras to become one of the premier divers not only at North Carolina but in the entire ACC as well.

The senior placed first in the 3-meter dive with a score of 307.95 and a close second in the 1-meter dive at 290.55 against Clemson on Sunday.

"He has been a solid contributor for four years," said UNC coach Frank Comfort. "The last year and a half, he really has moved into being a superb diver."

Solid is an understatement, considering some of Poitras' achievements for the Tar Heels.

He earned All-ACC honors as a sophomore and junior. As a junior, Poitras finished as the runner-up

in the 3-meter dive with a score of 592.65 — a school record — at the 2003 ACC Championships.

Already this year, he has collected first-place finishes in both the 1- and 3-meter dives in meets against Notre Dame and Duke.

Despite the consistently high numbers Poitras has put up for the Tar Heels, the transition from Canadian to American diving wasn't without its challenges.

"In the age-group program, there aren't that many good divers, and you know you'll probably beat them," Poitras said. "It's a lot easier to get into the good meets there. Down here, all the spots are taken up."

Poitras competed in junior nationals before he entered North Carolina, where he placed third in all events, and senior nationals, where he turned in two top-10 performances. In the Canadian nationals this summer, he took seventh place on the 3-meter, with 539.19, and eighth in the 1-meter with a score of 291.42.

The passion Poitras has is evident in his work in the pool and constant desire to improve. He said his biggest sports thrill is experimenting with new dives.

"It's always a thrill, and it opens up an opportunity to do better in meets," Poitras said. "Once I learn one dive, I get an adrenaline rush to learn other new dives. It helps build confidence and gives you something to work on."

It is this attitude and leadership that makes Poitras a role model for younger divers and helps put his team in a position to win every time.

"He was able to come back for the win when we absolutely needed it," Comfort said.

Although he has no set aspirations right now for the future, Poitras is happy with the way his career has gone, and he is looking to move on from diving following graduation.

"I can't see myself going back (to Canada)," Poitras said. "Whatever I do when I graduate will be based on something down here."

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FENCING

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part of the problem," Miller said. "When it's too easy, you tend not to fence your best."

Senior Matt Jednak had the best showing in men's epee, losing only four bouts, including two close contests against Haverford.

The women's epee team was without its strongest fencer, freshman Courtney Krolkoski, who was competing in the North American Cup.

Seniors Ivana Ferrer and Jessie Polini and sophomores Sallie Lampron and Emily Harrison performed well in her place, winning 45 of 55 bouts.

The men's foil team, led by sophomore Steve Piantadosi and senior C.J. Webster, lost its first contest against Clemson, but came back to win convincingly against the next six teams, finishing with a 45-18 bout record.

On the women's side, the foil group lost against Johns Hopkins 6-3, but pulled out close matches against Haverford and Florida and dominated the rest of their matches.

Senior Ivona Puzkarczuk lost only three bouts during the day, including a 5-4 bout against Haverford.

Though winning the meet was good, Miller and the team felt performing at home for the first time in their careers was the best part.

"It's great to fence at home because the kids can have their families and friends come and actually show them what it looks like," Miller said. "There's something special about a home meet."

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SWIMMING

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first tie in a dual meet since the program was started in 1938.

"It feels more like a loss than a win, because it ain't a win, and that's what you do it for," said Tar Heel coach Frank Comfort. "I was stunned when I heard the score. I thought we had lost the meet."

Senior co-captain Yuri Suguiyama led North Carolina (4-3-1, 1-0-1) with victories in the 1,000-yard freestyle and the 200-yard freestyle with times of 9 minutes, 22.39 seconds and 1:40.49.

"It's disappointing because every time you swim an opponent you want to win, but at the same time I felt like there were some pretty good individual efforts today," Suguiyama said. "I felt like we did as much as we could, and unfortunately, some of the races didn't go our way."

The 15th-ranked Tar Heel women's swim team dismantled the Tigers by winning 14 of 16 events and cruising to an easy 209-91 victory. Senior Jessi Perruquet and sophomore Lizzy Bruce each had strong individual efforts to help North Carolina (5-2, 3-0) remain undefeated in the ACC.

Bruce finished first in the 100 breaststroke in 1:04.27, the 200 breaststroke in 2:18.14, and the 200 individual medley in 2:06.23.

Bruce received the honor of being named the women's ACC Swimmer of the Week because of her strong performance in the

meet.

Perruquet won the 50 free in 23.88 and the 100 free with a time of 51.13.

"We're definitely happy after coming off last week when we had a loss," Perruquet said. "We swam our best last week, but it was nice to get back into the flow of winning meets."

Despite the victory, many of the women's times were significantly higher than they had been all season due to tough practices the past week.

"We won today but we were kind of off with a lot of our times," Perruquet said. "It's been a rough week of training for all the groups and it will continue to be that way for the next week or so until we start resting for the conference meet."

Senior Lindsay Waddell swept the 1-meter and 3-meter diving events with scores of 267.90 and 288.98, respectively.

The Tar Heels have their toughest meet of the season next week when they face the reigning men's and women's ACC champions, Virginia.

"It's getting to crunch time and the ACCs are right around the corner," Suguiyama said. "The meets aren't getting any easier, and I think there's going to be a sense of urgency at the meets coming up. We're going to have to step it up and get some wins."

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MEN'S HOOPS

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UConn coach Jim Calhoun. "But regardless, we need to adjust to the way they're calling the game."

But it was the officials that seemed to adjust at the half. UNC center Sean May, who struggled to contain Okafor, picked up his fourth foul with 15 minutes to play.

While he was out, Tar Heel forwards David Noel and Jawad Williams primarily attempted to lunge at Okafor and strip the ball without success. After the UConn center scored his 10th point of the half, cutting the UNC lead to one, Roy Williams called the timeout.

"They were feeling sorry for themselves," he said. "I thought we were saying, 'Oh gosh, here we go again.' And you can't play basketball like that. You have to be aggressive."

Making the defensive adjustments, UNC held Okafor to seven points the rest of the way. However, the Huskies took the lead on a Ben Gordon 3-pointer, and it swelled to four with 5:36 to play.

But Jawad Williams, who struggled to find his range during the loss at Maryland, cut the lead back to one with a 3 of his own.

"Tonight I wore a custom mask," said Jawad Williams, who was 6-for-9 with 18 points in 25 minutes. "The first one was something off the shelf. It helped me a lot. I can actually see something now."

From there, Rashad McCants was brilliant, scoring UNC's final 10 points, including a 3 to tie the game with 1:15 left and the go-ahead 3-pointer with six seconds to play.

UConn had a chance to send it to overtime, but a 3 by Gordon went left.

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MCCANTS

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"But he did make a big-time shot."

McCants' trey from the left wing with 6.2 seconds remaining broke an 83-83 tie and left the Huskies time only for a Ben Gordon desperation 3-pointer that came up short. McCants did, indeed, make a big-time shot — but Williams was correct to spread the credit around.

The play Williams called, which the Tar Heels tried twice with a 50-percent success rate in their loss to Wake Forest, worked perfectly.

Point guard Raymond Felton made a big-time read. Center Sean May set a big-time screen for McCants. All McCants had to do was catch Felton's pass and release.

"Big players make big shots at big times, and I just wanted to be that," McCants said. "Coach pulled my card, and he wanted me to take the shot. He had confidence in me, and that's all you can ask for in a coach."

Williams believed in his mercenary star for a reason. McCants got into a rhythm the last nine minutes, scoring 14 of UNC's last 19 points.

He was doing it inside and outside, making a hook shot in the post, a free-throw-line jumper, a zone-busting dunk, and the game-

tying 3-pointer from the right wing with 1:14 on the clock.

Unstoppable at times, McCants has absorbed considerable criticism from fans, coaches and media for offensive inconsistency and occasional poor defense. In UNC's three losses, McCants made just 17 of his 46 shots (37 percent).

But UConn coach Jim Calhoun said he knows how the Tar Heels can get the most out of McCants.

"What Roy Williams should do is schedule us 26 times a year," Calhoun said. "Last year (McCants) had 27 against us and this year he had 27 against us. So keep scheduling us, and he will have a real good time."

Williams said he thought it was "fitting" for McCants to cap his huge day with the game-winning basket, particularly because he has "been criticized more than anybody but Saddam."

Does this mean the scrutiny will relax?

"Nah," McCants said. "I really don't care about the criticism. It's going to happen. They're going to keep writing stories. I just find them quite amusing that people that don't know me have so much to say."

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UNC 86, Connecticut 83

Connecticut	36	47	83
North Carolina	50	36	86

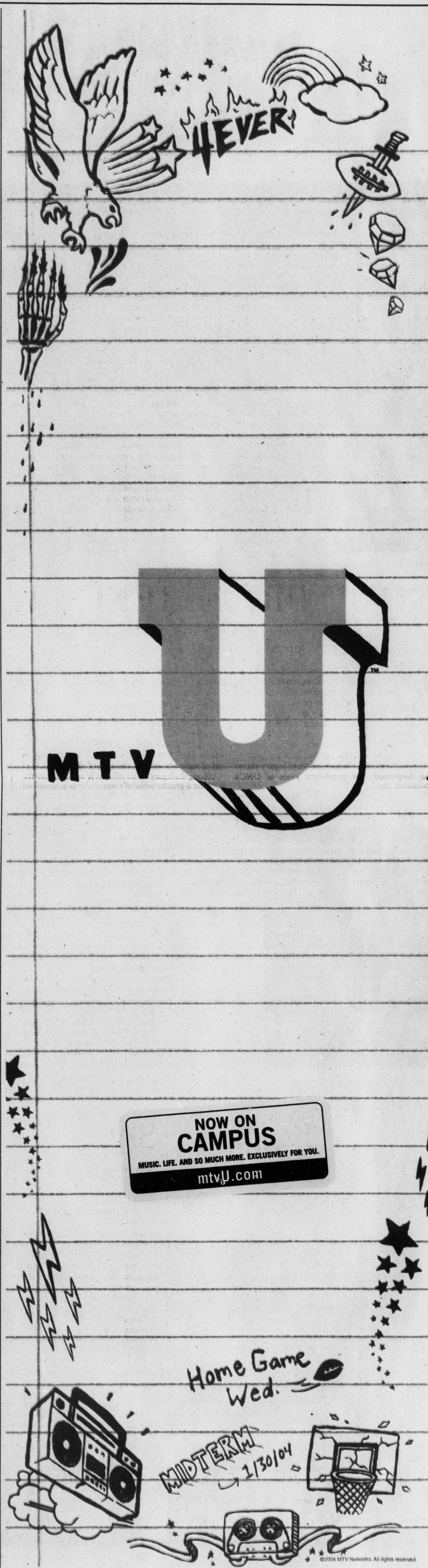
Connecticut (83)									
	pts	reb	ast	stl	blk	pts	reb	ast	stl
D. Brown	30	3-10	0-1	2-6	1	3	3		
Boone	24	5-6	0-0	3-3	3	1	10		
Chaffar	37	12-18	5-6	4-13	2	2	29		
Gordon	38	3-14	1-3	2-7	10	2	10		
T. Brown	22	0-2	0-1	0-2	5	4	0		
Villanueva	15	5-10	2-2	3-4	0	3	12		
Anderson	27	5-9	0-0	0-1	1	2	18		
Williams	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	1	2	0		
Armstrong	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Tooles	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Total	200	34-66	9-16	14-37	23	20	83		

Percentages — FG 48.8, FT 52.3, 3-point goals — 7-20, 35.0 (McCants 4-6, Gordon 3-4, D. Brown 0-3, Villanueva 0-2, Williams 0-1). Team rebounds — 6. Blocked shots — 11 (Okafor 6, Boone 3, Gordon, Villanueva). Turnovers — 21 (Okafor 5, D. Brown 4, Gordon 3, T. Brown 2, Anderson 3, T. Brown 2, Gordon 2, D. Brown, Boone).

North Carolina (86)									
	pts	reb	ast	stl	blk	pts	reb	ast	stl
Williams	25	6-9	3-3	0-1	1	2	18		
McCants	32	10-16	4-4	1-3	2	2	27		
May	22	3-14	2-2	4-11	0	4	8		
Scott	32	2-7	6-6	1-2	7	3	11		
Felton	33	2-6	1-2	0-3	7	3	8		
Noel	30	3-6	3-6	2-6	0	0	9		
Manuel	21	3-7	1-2	1-2	0	2	7		
Sancharis	3	0-2	0-2	2-2	0	0	0		
Terry	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Total	200	28-66	20-27	11-32	18	17	86		

Percentages — FG 43.9, FT 74.1, 3-point goals — 8-19, 42.1 (McCants 4-6, Williams 3-4, Scott 1-4, Felton 1-4, May 0-1). Team rebounds — 4. Blocked shots — 2 (May, Manuel, Turnovers — 15 (May 4, Scott 2, Williams 2, McCants 2, Noel 2, Manuel, Terry, Felton, Boone — 10 (Scott 3, McCants 2, Terry 2, Manuel, Noel, Felton).

Technical fouls — None. Attendance — 21,750.



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