

Seniors, freshman propel hot streak

BY DANIEL MALLOY
STAFF WRITER

While many students were basking in the heat on the beach during Spring Break, the North Carolina women's golf team was scorching hot on the links, winning two tournaments in a row.

The No. 20 Tar Heels staged a dramatic comeback win March 5-7 in Baton Rouge, La., taking the LSU/Cleveland Golf Classic title.

The team was in fourth place going into the final round but shot a 292 on Sunday, the best round of the day by 10 strokes, to stage the remarkable rally.

The Tar Heels edged second-place Tulane by three strokes.

The team then traveled to Blythewood, S.C., March 12-14 and won the Lady Gamecock Classic by nine strokes, this time holding on to its final-round lead.

In the two tournaments the Tar Heels finished ahead of No. 15 Tulane, No. 18 Wake Forest, No. 19 Texas, Furman and South Carolina — all teams that defeated the Tar Heels in the fall.

Coach Sally Austin, however, said she expected the results.

"I knew we could do this," she said. "I was just waiting for it to happen."

The team put together the victories thanks largely to the efforts of three top golfers: seniors Ashley Prange and Meaghan Francella and freshman Katie Miller.

Prange has been nearly unstoppable so far, taking home individual titles in both tournaments — the first victories of her career.

"Ashley is playing extremely well," Austin said. "She has been consistent with her ball striking and phenomenal around the greens. ... She's on a mission."

The team's other top senior, Francella, also turned in an out-

standing third in Louisiana and tied for fifth in South Carolina.

The excellence from the seniors was expected, but the talented Miller has been a welcome surprise, tying for 10th in Louisiana and finishing an impressive second in South Carolina.

Miller failed to place in the top 10 in the fall, but her success had been on its way even then.

"It took me time to get acclimated," Miller said. "The courses are a lot harder than junior golf courses, and it's just playing at another level."

The whole team will have to play at another level in the coming weeks as it faces tougher competition to prepare for the ACC and NCAA Tournaments.

The Tar Heels will travel to Austin, Texas, this weekend for the Betsy Rawls Longhorn Invitational, a tournament loaded with nationally ranked opponents.

Fourth-ranked California, No. 7 Arizona, No. 9 Vanderbilt, No. 11 Southern California, No. 13 Tulsa, No. 16 Oklahoma and No. 19 Texas will all be in the field in Austin.

"We have got to perform better than we have been," Austin said, hinting at the tough road to come.

But despite the difficult upcoming tests, UNC is mentally prepared, according to Miller.

"I think the wins have given us confidence," Miller said. "At the practice rounds in South Carolina, everyone was saying, 'We can win this tournament.'"

Austin also said that the confidence boost was needed, and that now the sky is the limit for the team.

Said Austin, "We certainly want to win every tournament from here on out."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Torrid Tar Heels trounce Tigers

BY DAVID MOSES
STAFF WRITER

With weather conditions causing a rain delay and both teams playing sloppy defense, the North Carolina baseball team still handily defeated Princeton.

UNC improved to 9-1 in its last 10 games with a 14-8 victory against the Tigers.

Getting his first start of the season and just the third start of his career, senior Whitley Benson pitched six strong innings for UNC (13-4).

"I was a little nervous," he said. "I just tried to keep the team in the ballgame."

Usually assigned to come out of the bullpen, Benson shook off his early nerves.

"I'd rather come out of the bullpen because it's better for the team," Benson said. "I'll do anything the coach asks me to."

North Carolina coach Mike Fox didn't expect anything else from his senior righthander.

"He just goes out and does his job," Fox said. "You can't say enough about that. That's a senior for you, just getting the job done for us."

The Tar Heels provided Benson with some run support when they jumped on the Tigers (6-2) early with two first-inning runs.

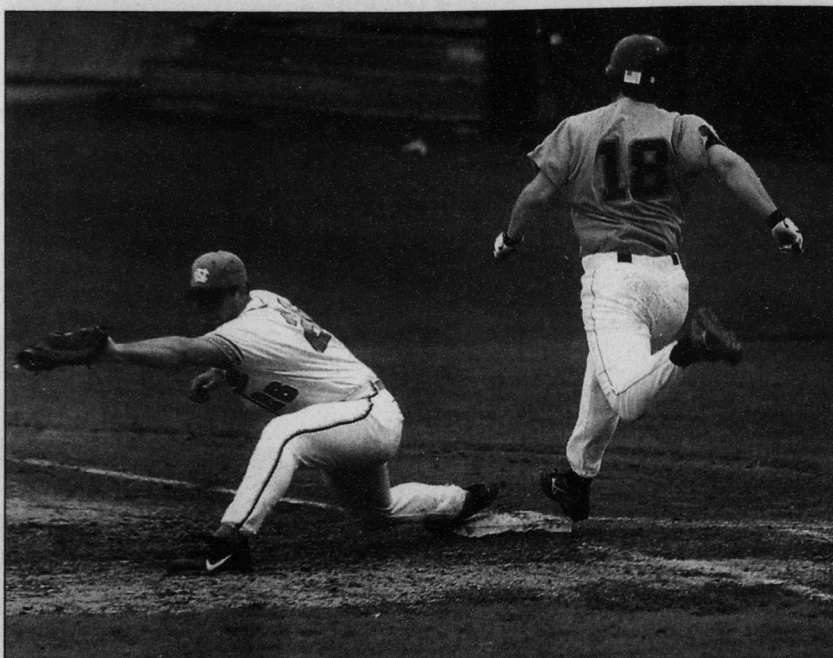
Leadoff batter Greg Magnum reached on a three-base error on a lazy fly ball to center.

It was a sign of things to come for the Tigers, who committed four errors on the day.

UNC made three errors. But Fox said he didn't think the wet conditions caused many of the mistakes.

"The fields were wet for both teams; they made some errors that are uncharacteristic for them," Fox said. "We just don't catch the ball."

UNC batted around in the second inning while scoring six runs



DTH/NANCY DONALDSON

UNC junior Chris Iannetta (26) stretches for a throw to retire Princeton's Aaron Prince in the Tar Heels' 14-8 victory against the Tigers at Boshamer Stadium on Tuesday. Iannetta went 1 for 5 with an RBI in the game.

and jumped out to an 8-0 lead.

Marshall Hubbard continued his hot hitting, going 3 for 4 with a home run and three RBI.

The junior right fielder leads UNC in runs, home runs, RBI and is tied for the team lead in hits.

Fox said he is glad that Hubbard has stepped up in his first season with the Tar Heels.

"We're happy he's hitting in the middle of the order and driving in some runs for us," Fox said.

Hubbard, who launched his seventh home run of the season in the fifth inning to give UNC a 9-0 lead, said he doesn't consider himself to be much of a power hitter.

"I'm more of a doubles hitter, but I just have happened to get some balls in the air," Hubbard said.

Hubbard also drove in a run in the first inning with a sacrifice fly and another in the sixth inning with a single to right field.

Princeton finally scored in the sixth inning on a deep two-run home run off of UNC relief pitcher Bo Dickerson.

The Tar Heels retaliated quickly in the sixth when they batted around for the second time in the game to make the score 14-2.

North Carolina committed two errors in the seventh inning to allow Princeton to cut the score to

14-5. Fox said he didn't think his team played as well as it could have throughout the game.

"First five or six innings, we were pretty good," he said. "Last three of four we weren't too good. We did get a little sloppy at the end, it was a little disappointing."

Hubbard said he knows the team is only going to improve throughout the season.

"We're coming around," he said. "We've got a couple more steps to take."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.



Homecoming 2004 October 25-30

Organizational Meeting

March 17 at 7 p.m., Carolina Union 3201

Let's make this the best Homecoming yet! Give us your input on the events you'd like to see included during the week of Homecoming.

If you can't make the meeting but would like to give input, please e-mail Bayley Crane, 2004 Homecoming Chair, at bayleyc@email.unc.edu.

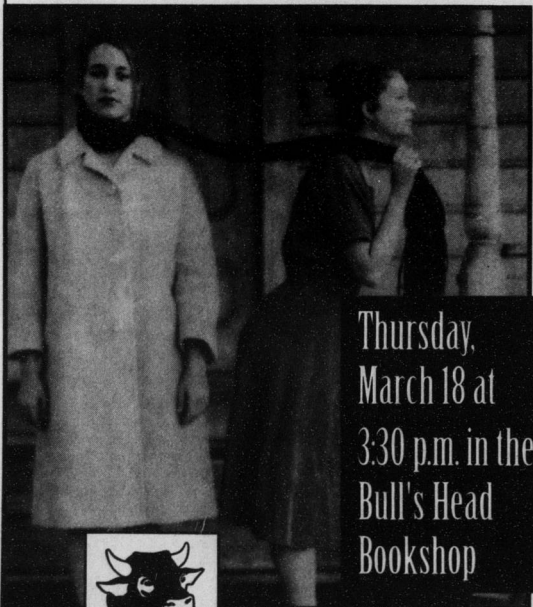
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