

Kalbas, UNC rebound after three-game skid

BY ANDY WALES
STAFF WRITER

Coach Brian Kalbas and the North Carolina women's tennis team got a wakeup call three weeks ago in the form of three consecutive losses to ranked opponents.

The slump provided motivation for the Tar Heels to beat ACC foes Virginia and Maryland this weekend 4-3 and 5-2, respectively.

After a 4-3 loss to then-No. 33 Wake Forest on March 24 — the Tar Heels' third straight against ranked opponents — the team needed to right the ship quickly with matches against No. 35 Florida State and No. 23 Notre Dame looming the next weekend.

Kalbas said he felt responsible for the loss and had to fix it.

"(The Wake match) was the first match where we didn't show up to play," he said. "It's my job to get them ready."

In a team meeting after the match, Kalbas told the team what it needed to hear.

"We can't expect teams to roll over for us," he said.

The team previously suffered defeats to No. 3 Florida and No. 5

Duke, both by 7-0 scores. Kalbas said the players felt the match against Wake wouldn't be that difficult, but UNC's misjudgment cost the team its fifth loss of the season.

The message was heard loud and clear. Although the team lost two days later in Tallahassee, Kalbas said the team competed extremely well in the 4-3 match. Two of the three UNC losses went to three sets, and Sara Anundsen lost a third-set tiebreak.

Two days after that, the team knocked off Notre Dame at home, 5-0, and since has won three conference matches to improve to 17-6 (3-3 in the ACC).

This is the first year Kalbas has coached UNC women's tennis. But his ability to turn a team around so quickly did not develop overnight.

He coached William and Mary's women's tennis team from 1992-2003, taking the team to nine Colonial Athletic Association titles and eight NCAA Tournaments.

But Kalbas attributes his success at UNC thus far to his stint as an assistant coach at Notre Dame. Though coaching at a high-profile school like UNC often can be

tough, Kalbas wasn't worried about coaching at a big-time athletic school because of his experience at Notre Dame.

Kalbas carries the same coaching philosophy with him wherever he goes. He wants to coach players that can excel in the classroom and on the tennis court.

"I'm a firm believer that if you put quality time into one, you can put it into the other," he said.

On the court, Kalbas enjoys coaching players that can think for themselves and not just rely on what their coaches say.

He doesn't have a particular technique with which he enjoys coaching the most.

But in regard to shaping his athletes' playing styles, he said, "I want to turn weaknesses into strengths, strengths into weapons."

He believes that hard work is the most important strength any tennis player should have.

"If someone doesn't want to compete, then it doesn't matter what skills they have," Kalbas said.

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Close games doom Tar Heels

Men's lacrosse hopes to convert in clutch

BY MARY DUBY
STAFF WRITER

The North Carolina men's lacrosse team is becoming infamous for its suspenseful games.

Five of the No. 5 Tar Heels' matches have been decided by one goal. Unfortunately for UNC (5-3), the team has been on the losing end of three of those battles.

Facing No. 2 Johns Hopkins (6-1) on Saturday turned out to be another one-goal loss as the Tar Heels fell 10-9 when Blue Jay Peter LeSueur scored with just 56 seconds remaining in the game.

"It was a heartbreaking loss for our team," junior attackman Jed Prossner said. "Every person put forth a tremendous effort."

The loss came just one week after UNC lost to then-No. 2 Maryland, 10-9.

North Carolina outshot Hopkins 45-37 on Saturday and won 13 face offs to the Blue Jays' 10.

The game had sentimental value for UNC coach John Haus, who was the head coach at Hopkins from 1998 to 2000 but chose to return to his alma mater, North Carolina.

"We really wanted this one for Coach Haus. This is probably the biggest win we could have gotten

for him," said Prossner, who led the Tar Heels with three goals and one assist. "It was really hard seeing him so down after the game because he did a fantastic job coaching us on Saturday."

Junior attackman Mike McCall added two more goals for the Tar Heels, while junior midfielder Lance Zimmerman made a goal and had two assists.

UNC led 6-4 after the first minute of the third quarter, but the Blue Jays responded with two goals within 85 seconds. Prossner retaliated with back-to-back goals of his own, but he and the Tar Heels could not hold off a Hopkins 4-1 run that decided the game.

"Once we had a two-goal lead we might have been too relaxed, which helped JHU get themselves right back in it," Prossner said.

This was not the first time North Carolina had a game that came down to the wire — a final score of 10-9 is starting to become somewhat of a UNC trademark.

On March 20, the Tar Heels defeated Duke 10-9 in sudden-death overtime, a little more than a week after beating Air Force by the same score.

However, UNC often has been

on the losing end of those close battles. All three of the team's losses have been one-goal margins.

"We have the experience, and we know what it takes to win them," Prossner said. "It is time that we start producing when the game is on the line."

Prossner had a chance with 2:40 remaining in the game to put UNC ahead 10-9, but goalie Scott Smith came up with the save.

"I am no longer a freshman," he said. "(I) know what needs to happen when the game is on the line and if we don't come through, I will take the blame."


Along with one-goal losses to Johns Hopkins and Maryland, the Tar Heels lost to Navy 9-8 in another intense overtime battle on March 5.

The Tar Heels will have to find a way to pull out the tight games before Saturday if they hope to defeat a Virginia squad that handed the Blue Jays their only loss this season.

"We just have to continue to believe, and I think things will fall into place," Prossner said. "We have great guys on the team and unlimited potential."

"Our time will come."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.



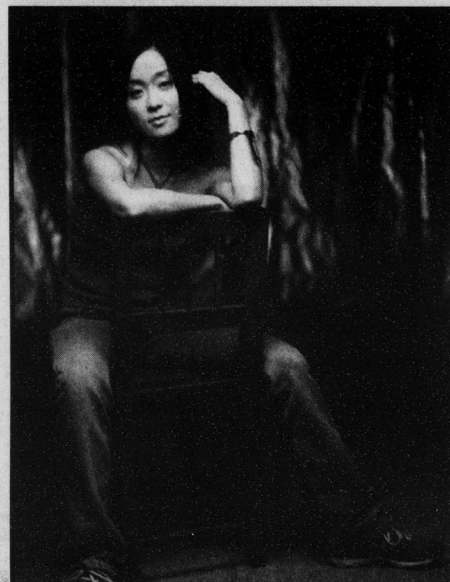
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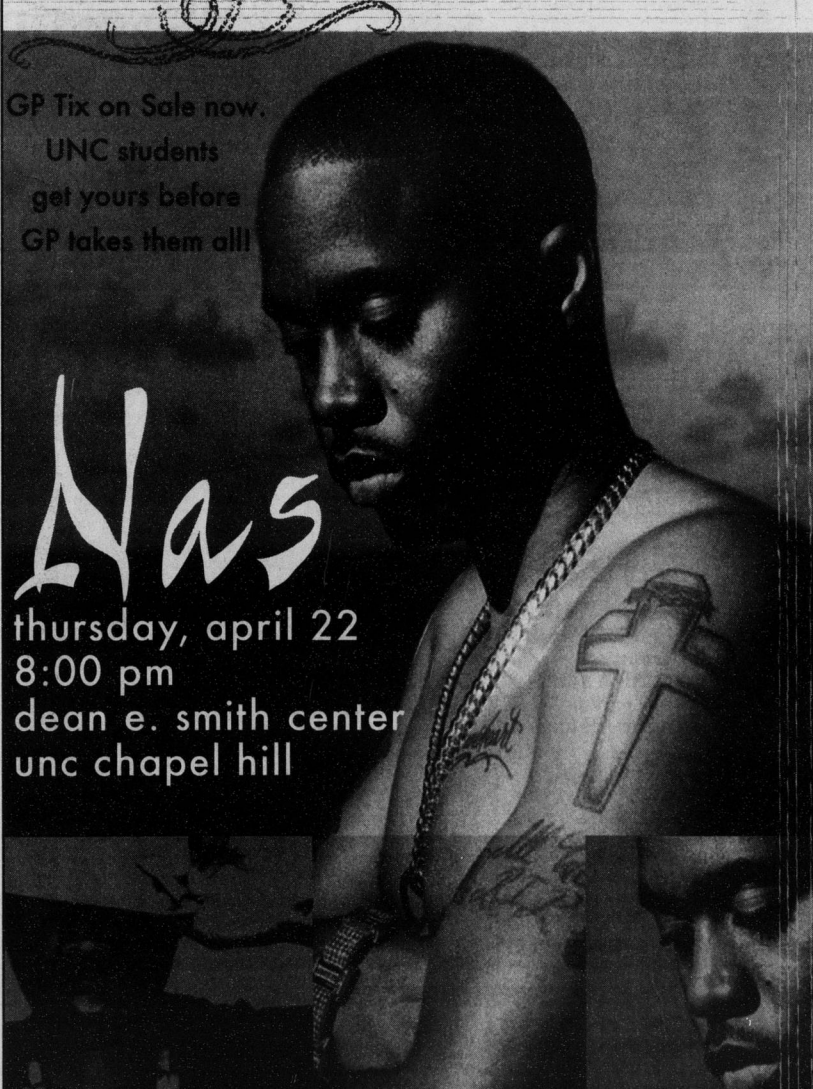
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