

DELAY OF GAME

New season lacking typical hype

The wait is finally over. Ever since the BCS proved incapable of putting together a satisfactory championship game — again — and the Patriots won the Super Bowl on a last-second Adam Vinatieri field goal — again — the collective cry in the sports world has been, "I can't wait for football season to begin again!"

Well now it's here, and the first games are upon us. So why doesn't it feel like it?

For some reason, I'm not getting the same anticipation for

the pigskin in Chapel Hill that I felt during the past seven months from sports fans elsewhere.

Could it be that North Carolina won just one home game last year?

Could it be because the ACC has welcomed two football powerhouses seemingly to bury the Tar Heels even lower in the conference cellar?

Or could it be that, with Dick Vitale hyping up the basketball team like he was Don King, everyone is saving the excitement for November?

All of these things surely play



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some role in the lack of passion surrounding the land of Carolina blue, and understandably so.

The Tar Heels did manage to lose in just about every manner last season, and it is hard to get pumped up for a season opener against a squad that rarely sees Division I-A competition.

But before you switch back to the riveting World Series of Poker, take a look at the national scope.

The BCS is back for another year of confusion and surprises. Who knows, maybe this year there will be national tri-champions.

Plus, chances are pretty slim that the year's most memorable replay will be another UNC defender getting steamrolled by an opposing running back ... right?

But all jokes aside, I really think the 2004 college football season will warrant something to cheer about, even within the walls of Kenan Stadium.

The same Ronnie McGill who ran for 244 yards and three touchdowns in one game is still here. Darian Durant is back under center, looking to break whatever UNC passing records are left without his name beside it.

Yes, the defensive side of the ball can be more questionable than Ricky Williams, but new co-defensive coordinator Marvin Sanders has a proven record of piecing together an impressive bunch.

And of course, the ultimate question is why the Tar Heels will line up against Miami on Homecoming of all days. But in college football, a win is never impossible on any given Saturday.

I could keep going with propositions, which is the beauty of football season's premiere. Anything could happen and is open to discussion.

So I don't know about you, but I'm hyped for football season, whether it be in Kenan Stadium or Bank of America Stadium, in the backyard or on the big screen.

Enjoy it while it lasts because before you know it, the new champion(s) of the gridiron will be crowned, and you will be wishing September was here — again.

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Tar Heel quarterback faces NFL doubters

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Despite Darian Durant's impressive stats at North Carolina, his NFL chances are difficult to measure.

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UNC's last meeting with a I-AA team wasn't the walk in the park that most had expected.

Previews of the nation's top matchups

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FSU and Miami usher in the ACC expansion era; the Aggie-Eagle Classic celebrates its 11th year.

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UNC men's soccer defender Tim Merritt tasted a championship in his first season. Three years later, he thirsts for the same prize.

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UNC's new co-defensive coordinator opens up about football, life and who's the greatest.

The BCS: Many changes, same outcome

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The BCS searches for a solution to its pitfalls, but the formula continues to use incorrectly the past as a model for the future.

Look what's new in Chapel Hill!



CHAPEL HILL

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2 line phones, free high speed Internet access
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