

The Daily Tar Heel

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UNC 31 MIAMI 28

UNBELIEVABLE

BY DANIEL BLANK ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

North Carolina wanted to send a message to fourth-ranked Miami on Saturday night, and it wasted little time in doing so.

On the fourth play of the game, UNC sent Mike Mason — in his first start of the season — down the left sideline against All-America candidate Antrel Rolle. Mason out-leapt Rolle to reel in the game's first score.

The message was simple. Despite the Hurricanes' gaudy ranking, undefeated record and seemingly vast edge in talent, the Tar Heels would not be intimidated.

For 60 minutes, UNC went toe-to-toe with Miami, sealing a stunning 31-28

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victory with a 42-yard field goal by freshman Connor Barth as time expired. The win was North Carolina's first-ever victory against an opponent ranked in the top five.

And one game after allowing a school-record 669 yards, UNC (4-4, 3-2 in the ACC) has suddenly catapulted itself into bowl contention.

"Our guys are as equally or better than their guys, bottom line," said UNC wide receiver Jesse Holley. "We wanted to come out first, and we wanted to say, 'Listen, we're as tough as them, and we can play with them.'"

Rolle said his teammates made too many errors on the field.

"Our coaches coach, but we go out there and don't execute and do things to beat ourselves," Rolle said. "Everybody in the country, they want to beat Miami. When we're helping them out, that's another person on our backs."

Although the Tar Heels wouldn't back down from the heavily favored Hurricanes (6-1, 3-1), Mason's TD catch still required perfect execution.

And UNC got exactly that as quarterback Darian Durant put the right amount of touch on the ball. Mason timed his jump perfectly to put the Tar Heels up 7-0 just 2 minutes, 30 seconds into the game.

"We were trying to make a play," Bunting said. "That was probably one of Darian's best throws of the season. We connected. It was a great throw and a great catch. ... It was a great way to get us started."

While the first score showed that the Tar Heels weren't intimidated by Miami, it also served as a precursor for a UNC team which, for the most part, out-executed the Hurricanes.

The UNC defense, which has struggled against the run all season, held Miami's ground attack to 77 yards on 23 carries.

"My hat's off to North Carolina," said Miami coach Larry Coker. "They outplayed



DTH/LAURA MORTON

UNC fans (above) rush the field at Kenan Stadium on Saturday night as the Tar Heels garnered a last-second upset of No. 4 Miami. The Homecoming victory was the first time the Tar Heels have defeated a team ranked in the top five. Below: Senior tight end Scott Brumett (87) rumbles toward the end zone, scoring a touchdown that gave UNC a 21-14 lead.

us overall tonight, and they deserved to win this football game."

On the other side of the ball, the UNC offensive line dominated the line of scrimmage.

They blew open huge gaps for the Tar Heel rushers who amassed 279 rushing yards, led by a career performance by Chad Scott.

Scott shattered his previous career high by rushing for 117 yards in the first half, ending up with 175 yards on 25 carries and two touchdowns. His final TD, a 9-yard scamper sprung from a block by Holley, put the Tar Heels up 28-21 in the fourth quarter.

Although Scott helped carry the Tar Heels to victory, he could barely carry himself out of the postgame press conference after sustaining a hip pointer in the fourth quarter.

Students eye final chance to cast ballot

quarter.

"I can't say enough about Chad Scott," Bunting said. "We knew we weren't going to play Ronnie (McGill), and we knew it was very unlikely we could play Jacque (Lewis). This young man really came through."

But Scott's resilience, which provided 14 yards of offense on UNC's game-winning 65-yard drive, embodied the Tar Heels' effort as a whole.

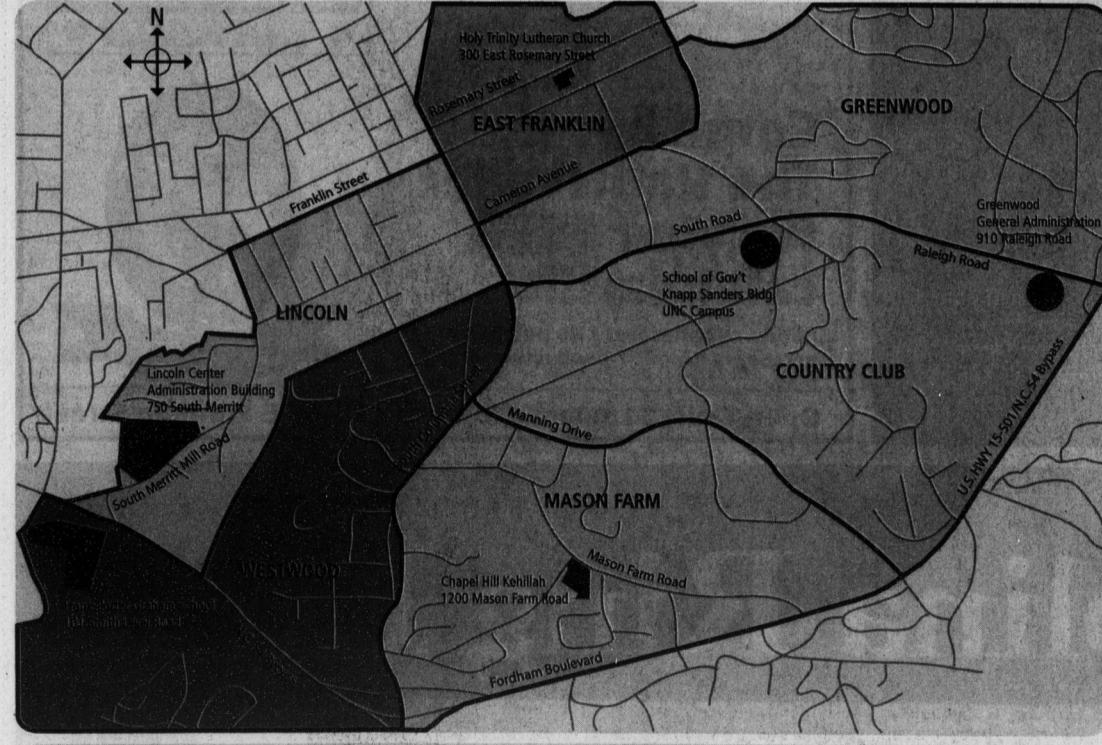
When Miami finally broke through to tie the score on a 38-yard drive late in the third quarter, the Tar Heels countered with their longest scoring drive of the year, a methodical 12-play, 78-yard march that chewed up 7:16.

After fullback Madison Hedgecock

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DTH/ANDREW SYNOWIEZ



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