

Tarpley returns from injury O'Reilly's OT goal moves UNC to ACC semifinals

BY DEREK HOWLES
STAFF WRITER

CARY — With about 10 minutes left in the first half of North Carolina's ACC Tournament quarterfinal match versus Maryland, Coach Anson Dorrance made a rather routine walk from the Tar Heel bench to the scorer's table at midfield.

Under normal circumstances, such action would garner little, if any, attention.

But these were not normal circumstances.

Standing next to the table was star forward Lindsay Tarpley. The junior was preparing to step onto the field for the first time since a broken right leg had forced her to the sideline nearly six weeks earlier.

Before she came in, she got some words of encouragement from the head coach.

"Basically, he told me that my first touch was going to be horrible, I wasn't going to be able to shoot, I wouldn't be able to tackle," Tarpley said.

Dorrance's predictions, joking or not, proved to be unfounded, as

Tarpley's play in 10 first-half minutes exceeded expectations.

"She's well ahead of what I expected, to be honest," Dorrance said. "What we were going to try to do today with her was play her a bit so she could have a taste of the game, and to be frank, I wasn't expecting her to do much."

And to think Tarpley wasn't even aware she would get a chance to play until right before the game was about to start.

"I thought I was just going to be able to warm up," she said. "Anson really didn't tell me I was going to play today."

Tarpley wasn't the only one who was surprised by her presence on the field.

"None of us even knew she was going to play today," said sophomore forward Heather O'Reilly. "I think it shocked all of us how well she did out there."

It was that performance that earned Tarpley an opportunity to return to the field for 26 more minutes after halftime.

"The 10 minutes she gave us (in

the first half), actually, she played very well," Dorrance said. "I was pleasantly surprised. She won the right to basically get some quality time in the second half."

But even though the 2003 National Player of the Year surpassed what was expected of her against Maryland, it was clear to Dorrance that she wasn't at full strength.

"Obviously she's not going to (have) all of her tools," Dorrance said. "But it's exciting to watch how her brain can still function."

Tarpley agreed with her coach's reserved but optimistic assessment.

"There's a lot of things I really feel I can't do yet," Tarpley said. "I'm hoping that'll come."

Still, the return of one of the Tar Heels' best players is nothing but good news for the defending national champions.

"Obviously we're going to need her long-range," Dorrance said. "We're absolutely thrilled to have her back."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Goal keeps Tar Heels out of penalty kicks

BY BRIAN MACPHERSON
SENIOR WRITER

CARY — She's already considered a fiery competitor, a speed demon and a world-class scorer.

But it's time to add one more attribute to Heather O'Reilly's resume — prophet.

The sophomore, who had several early chances to find the back of the net, approached Coach Anson Dorrance at halftime of Wednesday's ACC Tournament quarterfinal and told him she would win the game for him.

It took nearly 58 more minutes, including two overtimes, but O'Reilly delivered on her promise.

Forward Jaime Gilbert served a pinpoint cross from the left wing, and O'Reilly blasted the ball home with her forehead.

The goal broke a scoreless tie and gave the North Carolina women's soccer team a 1-0 win against Maryland at SAS Soccer Park.

"I just wanted him to know to not lose faith in me and that I wasn't a complete head case at that point, that I was still ready to go, I was still focused and I was still going to help out the team," O'Reilly said.

The game-winning goal rescued the Tar Heels from a game they dominated but very easily could have lost if it had reached penalty kicks.

North Carolina outshot Maryland by a margin of 26-3, but the Terrapins would have had the momentum if they had succeeded in forcing a shootout to decide the game.

"Usually the team that dominates loses in penalty kicks," Dorrance said.

And the last time the Tar Heels had to decide a game in that fashion, they lost — N.C. State converted four kicks to North Carolina's three in the 1988 ACC Tournament final.

Both teams had chances to win the game in regulation.

Anne Morrell had a chance to put the Tar Heels on the scoreboard less than 15 minutes into the game with a hard shot at the top-left corner of the net.

But Maryland goalkeeper Nikki Resnick, who played an outstanding game from start to finish, dove across the goal and snatched the ball with both hands for one of her 10 saves.

"Each one of us knows we have to absolutely everything we can to keep the ball out of the net,"

Resnick said.

The Terrapins had their best chance of the half when North Carolina goalkeeper Aly Winget strayed too far off her line in breaking up a cross. Forward Kelly Rozumalski ripped a shot at the open net, but Winget knocked the ball away with a sprawling save.

O'Reilly almost gave the Tar Heels the lead early in the second half when she took a pass from Elizabeth Guess on the left side and rolled a shot just past the far post.

The Terrapins bunkered down in their own end as the half progressed, and Dorrance countered with an unorthodox tactical move — employing a fourth forward in his formation.

That forward was Guess, who responded with perhaps her best game of the season.

It was Guess, in fact, who found Gilbert along the left side for the game-winning cross in the second extra period.

And O'Reilly, as she had promised she would, buried it.

"I didn't go follow it over there like I may have done earlier in the season," she said. "I stayed disciplined and stayed wide on my side. It was a great serve by Jaime, and I just tried to get my head on it."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Tran leads Tar Heel defense

BY DANIEL MALLOY
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

In the first game, it was her penalty-stroke save that sealed the win and prompted a wild celebration.

In the second game, it was the overtime goal she allowed that sent her team home disappointed.

North Carolina field hockey goalkeeper Katy Tran has been the focal point of both of UNC's games against No. 1 Wake Forest this season. If the two rivals meet again in Friday's ACC Tournament semifinal, her play will once again be thrust into the spotlight.

The No. 2 Tar Heels will face the Demon Deacons if Wake beats No. 16 Virginia in the play-in game Thursday.

But Tran said that even in pressure-packed moments such as the penalty strokes in the Oct. 2 game, she remained poised.

"When I was going into that, it was probably the most confident and calm I have been all season," Tran said.

"I had faith in my teammates that they were going to stick their

shots, and I just kept telling myself, 'You just have to save one.'"

Tran is the heart of a stellar UNC defense that has produced shutouts in ten of the team's 19 games.

"Defense wins games, so it's very, very stressed," said senior Katy Potter. "Almost in every drill, it is the defense that we really try to concentrate on."

The defense has been outstanding, but it faltered against Wake. Two of the three games in which UNC has allowed more than one goal this season have come against the Demon Deacons.

The key to Wake's offensive prowess is Kelly Dostal, who leads the ACC with 24 goals and 63 points.

"They are very good offensively," said UNC coach Karen Shelton. "They are hard to stop. Kelly Dostal is one of the best players in the country."

UNC knows about Dostal, as well as the rest of the team, after more than a few games against the Deacs and plenty of scouting.

"This is my fifth year, so I've played

them many times," Potter said. "And this time, it's going to come down to shutting those key players down and playing our game plan."

The Tar Heels expected to play Wake in the ACC Tournament, but not in the first round.

Because of a tiebreaker and the fact that the Deacons' victory against UNC did not count in league standings, Wake slipped to fourth in the ACC, despite being ranked No. 1 in the nation.

Tran said the Tar Heels do not mind playing Wake a game early. Even though both games this season have been nailbiters, she said she enjoys the competition of the rivalry.

"It's fun to get out there because we know they are a good team," Tran said.

"Just like all the other teams, they are going to bring their best, and they have a really high level of play. So it's going to be fun. It's going to be really intense."

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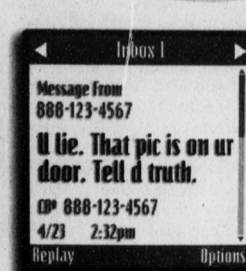
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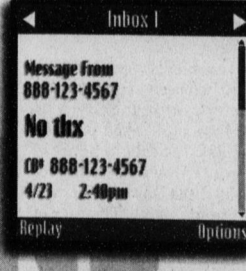
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