

MCCANTS

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"I think Rashad was focused," Williams said. "He had 20 at half-time, 28 for the game, so he accomplished more in a couple of minutes here today than he did last year in the whole game."

McCants also gave a strong effort on the defensive end. He hustled back to stuff 6-foot-10 Randolph Morris on a fast-break dunk attempt.

In the first half, McCants picked the ball from his man and raced down the court for a left-handed slam to put the Tar Heels up 24-6 — their biggest lead of the game.

But it is McCants' prodigious scoring ability that made him the center of attention at the postgame press conference and the focal point of the UNC offense.

McCants has been sinking 3-pointers with lethal accuracy, connecting on 53.5 percent of his shots. He hit 4-of-7 attempts against Kentucky from behind the arc.

"I feel like whenever I shoot the ball, it's got a 50 percent chance of going in — maybe more now," said McCants, who raised his scoring average to 20.3. "I feel comfortable just shooting the 3 right now, but I want to add more and more to my game."

But McCants was wreaking havoc in the paint as well. When he wasn't scoring, he was getting to

the free throw line. After struggling from the line earlier in the year, he took advantage of his opportunities Saturday, going 10 for 11.

"Rashad, he's a scorer, that's what he does," said UNC forward David Noel. "He can put the ball in the cupboard any given time, and that's what we need from him. He stops a lot of their runs with a deep 3-ball or a drive to the basket or getting fouled."

McCants knocked down a 3 with four seconds left in the first half to stake UNC to a 15-point lead.

And when Kentucky responded with a 9-0 run after the break, McCants killed the Wildcats' momentum with a twisting layup off a lob from Sean May.

"I'm looking to penetrate to (McCants) side, hoping his guy will come help, and I can kick it to him for an open 3," said point guard Raymond Felton. "If I'm trying to get a jump shot, then yes, I'm going to Rashad's side because he's a very good shooter under pressure and in big parts of games."

McCants' only misstep came when Felton was out of the game midway through the second half because he reinjured his left wrist.

McCants walked the ball up the floor and tried to squeeze off a shot through a triple team without passing the ball.

Williams sat McCants immediately after the sequence. It was a

scheduled rest — McCants played a team-high 34 minutes — but Williams said he still was annoyed by the lack of ball movement.

Three minutes later, McCants was back in, and on the first possession, he wound up matched up with Morris on the perimeter. After lulling Morris with the dribble, the 6-foot-4 McCants drained a 3 over the Kentucky center.

"He's playing a lot more comfortable in his second year under Coach Williams," said Kentucky coach Tubby Smith. "He's understanding where to take his shot, and he's patient. We didn't really have an answer for him."

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PENN STATE

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we actually believed it. When somebody said it, we believed we were going to get that stop, and they weren't going to get any closer."

Erlana Larkins scored 15 points for the Tar Heels, who jumped out to a seven-point lead when La'Tangela Atkinson stole an errant pass from Harris and made a layup 6:11 in.

But the Lions came back and took their first lead, 23-21, on Harris' 3-pointer from the top of the key with 8:56 left in the half.

Penn State 77, UNC 71

Summary table for Penn State 77, UNC 71. Columns: Team, FG, FT, 3PT, REB, A, PF, TP.

Player stats for Penn State (77). Columns: Player, min, fg, ft, 3pt, re, a, pf, tp.

Percentages — FG 49.7 FT 85.7 3-point goals — 7-22. 319 (Latta 5-9, Metcalf 1-7, McElie 1-3, Atkinson 0-1, Bell 0-1, Little 0-1). Team rebounds — 2. Blocked shots — 2 (Atkinson, Larkins). Turnovers — 14 (Latta 4, Atkinson 3, Bell 3, Metcalf 3, Larkins). Steals — 10 (Atkinson 3, Bell 3, Little 3, McElie).

Player stats for UNC (71). Columns: Player, min, fg, ft, 3pt, re, a, pf, tp.

Percentages — FG 50.0 FT 81.2 3-point goals — 6-12. 500 (Harris 3-6, Strom 1-4, Brandon 1-2, Wright 1-1). Team rebounds — 4. Blocked shots — 2 (Brown 2). Turnovers — 12 (Strom 3, Wright 3, Harris 3, Schwab 2, Joseph 4). Steals — 9 (Strom 3, Harris 3, Schwab, Wright). Technical fouls — None. Attendance — 9,163.

WRESTLING

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who survived Mock's trial by fire is Drew Forshey, who had a strong performance Saturday.

Although he lost to Christian Staylor from Old Dominion in the 125-pound semifinals, Forshey showed promise.

After falling behind 4-0, Forshey battled back, but Staylor stalled enough to earn the 5-2 victory.

"Drew looked phenomenal in that match," Mock said. "(Staylor

is) one of the best kids in the country, and as far as I'm concerned, he didn't lose — he ran out of time."

UNC was able to pick up the slack for Evan Sola, the team leader and 2003 All-American, after he injured his shoulder last weekend.

Mock said he was not going to take chances with his star.

"In the preseason, if they are hurt, we pull them out, don't wrestle them," Mock said.

Although the season has technically started, Mock still refers to this part of the schedule as the pre-

season. The Tar Heels will wrestle in two more large tournaments before the dual-meet season opens.

And for a program looking to turn itself around, efforts like Saturday will pay dividends in ACC play.

"We don't worry about winning or losing," Mock said. "This is a preseason tournament; that's what these are, up until we get into January. What they are for is to get better and improve."

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"We're good, and we know we're good, and we know everything we have to do."

DAVID NOEL, JUNIOR

"I don't think he's that type of player," Felton said. "I don't know the kid that well, but I don't think he was trying to do that."

Felton took out any frustrations on the court by attacking the basket vigorously when he returned three minutes later.

"I was sort of angry a little bit," he said. "Not necessarily angry at the fact that he hit my arm, but that it hurt. Of course I came out and played harder."

That latter statement also could have been applied to Sean May as he rebounded — literally — from his poor showing at Indiana.

May was monstrous on the boards, snatching 19 rebounds in the game. He also ran the floor with abandon, finishing five fast breaks for UNC, four of them with dunks.

Three of those buckets and an assist came during a two-minute stretch early in the second half that extended North Carolina's lead to 10 after a brief Wildcat run to open the period.

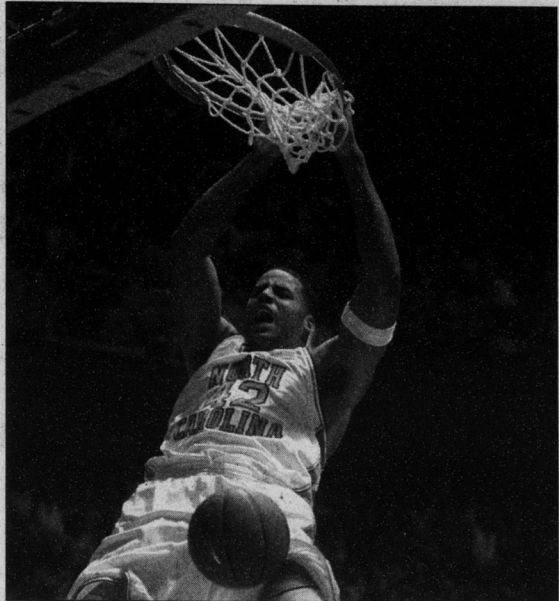
May and his Tar Heel teammates passed every test Kentucky provided and are starting to get a handle on their full potential.

"We're good, and we know we're good, and we know everything we have to do," said forward David Noel. "We have to go out and play defense every night, and if we can do that every night ... hopefully the outcome will be like it was tonight."

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UNC 91, Kentucky 78. Summary table and player stats for UNC 91, Kentucky 78. Columns: Team, FG, FT, 3PT, REB, A, PF, TP.

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DTH/KATE BLACKMAN

North Carolina center Sean May scored 14 points in UNC's sixth straight win on Saturday afternoon. He also gathered 19 rebounds, a season high.

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