



BEN COUCH
VIEW FROM THE COUCH

Tar Heels impossible to predict

North Carolina's going to the Tire Bowl. Did anyone see this coming? Honestly? Well, scanning through my columns this semester, I might have.

Or I'm just full of crap. Here are the clips, so you can figure it out for yourself:

Sept. 1: (Football's) a team coming off a 2-10 season that isn't expected to be competitive in the ACC, let alone on the national level.

Yeah ... whoops.

Sept. 3: The Tar Heels enter the 2004 season with a varied, proven offense that likely will improve on last year's performance; improvement is also likely for the young defense, if only because it can't get worse. Special teams will be a strength. Prediction? (Alter-ego): I'll give 'em the first one, the last one and one more for good measure. 3-8, 2-6 in the ACC. I'm out. Peace.

Me: ... I'm going to go out on a limb and say four or five wins, with at least a 3-5 record in the ACC.

Okay, so the team summary paragraph is pretty much on point. And even though I hedged my bets by making two predictions, the second of which was wishy-washy, both undersold the team's six wins and 5-3 record in the ACC.

Sept. 7: ... It's OK to feel good about this team's chances. At worst, they're going to give people some problems. At best, they've got bowl potential.

Giving myself more outs than Doyle Brunson, I managed to nail both calls. The Tar Heels realized that bowl potential, and they nearly ruined Virginia Tech's ACC championship season before Darian Durant was dropped for an 11-yard loss to push Connor Barth out of field goal range.

Oct. 9: ... Every time I look at the remaining schedule, I can't help but see games the Tar Heels can win.

They only need three to save Bunting's job.

Said when UNC was 2-3, it turned out there were five more games it could win. And the team not only saved Bunting's job but earned him a two-year extension.

Oct. 27: After seven games, UNC has proven itself inconsistent. There's no way of knowing whether Saturday's game against No. 4 Miami will feature a valiant losing effort by the Tar Heels or fans who are forced to entertain themselves by guessing when the Hurricanes will blow by the half-century mark ...

Bunting better be ready for the Duke game Nov. 20 — it might just be his Mississippi State.

Yeah ... that's the second whoops of the semester. The Miami game was the biggest football upset in UNC history.

And the Duke game never really came close to being Bunting's equivalent to Ron Zook's disaster against Mississippi State — the team won big, a victory the coach parlayed into the aforementioned extension.

Upon review, those eight predictions break down to two clunkers, two that were on point and four that fall somewhere in the middle. The lesson? I probably don't know what I'm talking about.

But after reading "View From the Couch" for the 18th time, you should have realized that.

Since this is the last time you'll be hearing from me this year, here's a few more predictions to keep you entertained during finals:

North Carolina is going to beat Boston College on Dec. 30. Bunting will receive yet another extension — once Chancellor James Moeser recovers from tripping over Director of Athletics Dick Baddour while running to talk to the Board of Trustees. And even if I'm right on both counts, somebody, somewhere, will still think that I'm full of crap.

Contact Ben Couch at bcouch@email.unc.edu.



North Carolina fourth-year coach John Bunting guided the Tar Heels to a 6-5 record and an improbable bid to the Continental Tire Bowl. UNC will face future ACC foe Boston College in the Dec. 30 contest at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium. The Tar Heels finished 5-3 in the ACC, good for a third-place tie, after being picked 10th in the pre-season media poll.

TAR HEELS TO GROUND EAGLES WITH RUN GAME

Game and Time: No. 25 Boston College vs. North Carolina in the Continental Tire Bowl. Kickoff is at 1 p.m. Dec. 30.

Site: Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte.

TV/Radio: The game will be televised by ESPN2. The Tar Heel Sports Network will provide radio coverage; its flagship station is WCHL-AM, 1360.

2004 Records: Boston College is 8-3. North Carolina is 6-5.

Series: Tied 1-1.

Personnel update: *Boston College* — QB Paul Peterson (broken hand) is expected to play. *North Carolina* — RB Jacque Lewis (broken foot) is out.

The key matchup: North Carolina's multifaceted running game against the Boston College defensive front.

In their fourth game of the season, the Eagles held Wake Forest running back Chris Barclay, arguably the best back in the ACC, to just 57 yards on 24 carries.

But on Nov. 27, in a must-win game against Syracuse to secure a Bowl Championship Series berth, the BC defense surrendered a woeful 309 yards on the ground.

Nearly half of those yards came courtesy of Syracuse safety Diamond Ferri, who was forced into the Orange backfield after injuries to Walter Reyes and Damien Rhodes. Reyes, one of the top backs on the East Coast, did not even suit up against BC.

If that same Boston College rush defense shows up on Dec. 30 in Charlotte, look for North Carolina to control the game on the offensive side of the ball.

Despite the injury to back Jacque Lewis, the Tar Heels' power-speed combination of Chad Scott and Ronnie McGill has proved difficult to stop.

Scott, previously a third-stringer who was forced into duty against Miami because of injuries to Lewis and McGill, has rushed for more than 100 yards in

three of UNC's last four games.

And McGill, hobbled by a sprained ankle that he suffered Sept. 18 against Georgia Tech, seemed to regain his top form in the Tar Heels' season finale against Duke, running for 101 yards.

Eagles coach Tom O'Brien and defensive coordinator Frank Spaziani will have to help the Eagle rush defense regain its early-season form — or else it could be a long day in front of the UNC-partisan crowd.

Final analysis/prediction: The two teams enter this game with emotions that could not be more dissimilar.

Boston College bungled an opportunity to travel to Tempe, Ariz. for the Fiesta Bowl in its embarrassing 43-17 loss to Syracuse at home. The Eagles entered that game flying high with a four-game winning streak, including an impressive 36-17 win against West Virginia in Morgantown.

The Tar Heels, meanwhile, finished tied for third in the ACC despite being picked 10th in the preseason poll. They also ended the season with two consecutive road wins to qualify for bowl contention.

The story is simple — Boston College considers the Tire Bowl a disappointment. North Carolina couldn't be more thrilled to play a bowl game in its home state after winning more games this season that it had in the previous two combined.



And while the two teams enter the contest with a combined nine-game bowl winning streak — five for the Tar Heels, four for the Eagles — something has to give.

Look for quarterback Darian Durant to make it six for UNC in his final game donning the powder blue and white.






The bottom line: North Carolina 34, Boston College 27.

— Compiled by Jacob Karabell

THE LOWDOWN ON THE TIRE BOWL

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  | No. 25 Boston College vs. North Carolina |  |
| (8-3) | Bank of America Stadium, 1 p.m. | (6-5) |

HEAD TO HEAD

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| BC's Rush vs. UNC's Front Seven | Facing BC's freshman backfield duo of L.V. Whitworth and Andre Callender, both of whom average more than 55 yards per game, will be a difficult task for an improved-but-still-struggling UNC rush defense. Edge: BC |  |
| BC's Pass vs. UNC's Secondary | Gerald Sensabaugh has helped the Tar Heel secondary immensely, but Eagles senior QB Paul Peterson ranks among the top signal callers in the Big East. If his injured hand is 100 percent, he could dominate. Edge: BC |  |
| UNC's Rush vs. BC's Front Seven | Good luck, Boston College. UNC's two-headed running attack of Chad Scott and Ronnie McGill should thrive against a rush defense that surrendered 141 yards to a third-stringer in its last game. Edge: UNC |  |
| UNC's Pass vs. BC's Secondary | In his final game just 100 miles from his hometown, UNC QB Darian Durant will look to continue his all-star caliber play of recent weeks. The Eagles' pass defense is solid, but Durant will be on a mission. Edge: UNC |  |
| Special Teams | Both squads have solid special teams, but the biggest disparity comes in kickoff coverage. Boston College is No. 1 in the country; the Tar Heels are No. 104. Aside from that, the matchup appears close to even. Edge: BC |  |

The Bottom Line — UNC 34, Boston College 27

COMPILED BY JACOB KARABELL

Lilly hosts children's exercise program

BY BRIAN MACPHERSON
SENIOR WRITER

A young boy in glasses sat by himself, staring at the walls of the Eddie Smith Fieldhouse while the dozens of youngsters on their backs around him pedaled their legs wildly in the air.

Kristine Lilly quickly took notice, and after she tapped him on the shoulder and spoke words of encouragement in his ear, she leaned back and began moving her legs in the air in similar fashion.

After a moment of hesitation, her new friend followed suit.

Encouraging the young boy to get active was consistent with the theme of the day. Officials from the School of Public Health announced Monday that 76 percent of third-graders involved in the six-week Get Kids in Action program, a partnership between North Carolina and the Gatorade Co., were reporting at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

"UNC and Gatorade aren't afraid to reach for what some might see as something too hard to achieve, to take on the epidemic of overweight children," said Lilly, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and former UNC women's soccer player.

The Get Kids in Action campaign partnered North Carolina student-athletes with third-grade students at Pathways and Hillsborough elementary schools to encourage and discover creative ways to reach a healthy level of physical activity every day.

But activities didn't just include team sports. After Monday's celebration of the program's success, children ran in circles,

made swimming motions with their arms, turned cartwheels and danced the Hokey Pokey.

"It could be organized sports, riding bikes, playing or just chasing bees," said Dianne Ward, the program's director of research.

Student-athletes from UNC teams — including football, volleyball, field hockey, women's tennis, women's soccer and women's rowing — took part in Monday's ceremony.

The student-athletes, in fact, seemed to enjoy the program as much as the children did.

"College students can tend to look inward," said John Blanchard, UNC senior associate athletic director. "This is a chance for them to get out in the community, to get outside the Carolina campus, outside the athletic arena, and go back and work with young kids."

Get Kids in Action is a four-year, \$4 million pilot partnership among the School of Public Health, the Department of Athletics and the Gatorade Co. designed to fight obesity in children.

The success of the program bodes well for its organizers' goal of encouraging other colleges and universities to adopt similar initiatives.

"We're a pilot with Gatorade, and we're hoping that we can partner with them and spread the program to other institutions across the country," Blanchard said. "Once again, Carolina will be a leader in having student-athletes get involved in the community."



DTH/CARTER MURPHY

Two-time Olympic gold medalist and former UNC women's soccer star Kristine Lilly (center) participated in the Get Kids in Action celebration at the Eddie Smith Fieldhouse on Monday.

Participating third-graders kept activity journals throughout the six-week program and returned them to their teachers to tally the results.

The student-athletes visited classrooms weekly to lead the children in activities and to help tally the results.

By the sixth week of the program, more than three-quarters of the participants were exercising for more than an hour every day.

"He had more energy to do a lot more things," Carol Andrews, the parent of a third-grader, said about her son. "I'm not sure what specifically brought about the changes, but I know he was motivated by the student-athletes in the classroom."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.