

Tar Heels shut out Purdue Pringle shines in UNC victory

BY DANIEL MALLOY
SPORTS EDITOR

During the second set of his match against North Carolina freshman Benjamin Carlotti, Purdue's Colin Foster knocked a forehand just wide of the sideline to lose a game, falling behind 5 to 4 and nearing defeat.

Foster swiftly removed his Boilermakers hat and smashed it against the wall with his racket.

Frustration was the emotion of the day for No. 68 Purdue, which fell 7-0 to the No. 30 Tar Heels on Sunday at Cone-Kenfield Indoor Tennis Center despite playing several close matches.

"They were pretty tight matches all the way through," said Coach Sam Paul. "I was pleased with how we played in some pressure situations."

Two matches went to three sets,

and another two had sets decided by tiebreakers. But the breaks all went North Carolina's way.

The Tar Heels (6-2) picked up the doubles point with wins by Geoff Boyd and Brad Pomeroy at the No. 1 seed and Jonathan Janda and Raian Luchici at No. 3.

Boyd and Pomeroy are the ninth-ranked tandem in the nation but struggled with the serves of Purdue's David Robinson and Paul Rose.

"You have to keep working at it, keep grinding until you get a feel for the serve," Pomeroy said. "You just have to keep working every point to make sure to keep the pressure on your opponent."

Boyd and Pomeroy finally broke serve to take a 5-4 lead, and they held on for an 8-6 victory.

At No. 1 singles, the 66th-ranked Luchici looked like he was on his

way to an easy win after cruising 6-0 in the first set. But No. 78 Paul Rose took the second set, forcing Luchici to a final frame, which the UNC junior won 6-2.

Pomeroy clinched the match for the Tar Heels at No. 2 singles by taking down Sounak Chatterjee 7-6 (7-5), 6-4. The junior rushed out to big leads in both sets but had to withstand a strong charge from Chatterjee to pull off the win.

Carlotti and Foster's match at No. 5 was also full of ups and downs. UNC's Parisian freshman used his smooth form to fight back from early deficits in both sets, taking the match 6-4, 6-4.

"I was pleased for him," Paul said. "He's been a little bit down. He's lost some matches. He's a fighter. He cares an awful lot, but he's learning."

With the match already clinched, the only remaining drama was whether UNC would pull off the shutout of the Boilermakers (1-2). Tar Heel Sebastian Guejman secured that feat at No. 6 by coming back in the third set against Eric Hodgemen, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.

The win was the Tar Heels' fourth in a row after the team dropped two consecutive matches on the road to Northwestern and Notre Dame in January.

"I think we're all starting to click a little bit," Porter said. "Every season you're going to have a few bad losses, and it's much better to have it come earlier than later. I think we're ready to take on the challenge that's in front of us."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

BY JACOB KARABELL
SENIOR WRITER

A North Carolina freshman forward finished Friday's game perfect from the field and perfect from the foul line, in addition to tying a career high in rebounds.

One might assume that player to be Erlana Larkins, who has garnered national attention with her lofty shooting percentage and domination in the paint this season.

But instead, it was UNC's other rookie post player — LaToya Pringle — who filled that description against Virginia Tech at Carmichael Auditorium. She made all five field goals and all six foul shots to finish with an ACC career-high 16 points in just 16 minutes off the bench.

Pringle's performance helped explain why she has seen her role increase for the surging Tar Heels. Though she played just three minutes against then-No. 1 Duke on Jan. 24, her 16 minutes against the Hokies was the most she's played in an ACC contest.

Coach Sylvia Hatchell even tapped her as the first post player off the bench Friday, a role senior Kenya McBee primarily has served in this season.

"She's really been playing well and pushing us to play her more," Hatchell said. "We're just trying to get her defense a little bit better. But she's been doing a nice job for us coming off the bench."

Pringle entered the game with 13 minutes to play in the first half, subbing for Larkins with the Tar Heels trailing 17-12.

When play resumed after UNC guard La'Tangela Atkinson missed a free throw, the Tar Heels earned the rebound to give them another opportunity to cut into the Va. Tech lead. On that possession, Nikita Bell found Pringle in the post for a layup to cut the deficit to five.

About a minute later, Bell found

"I try my hardest every night to do what I can for the time that I'm in (the game)."

LATOYA PRINGLE, UNC FORWARD

Pringle again for an easy layup. That basket tied the game at 19, and the Tar Heels earned the lead permanently shortly thereafter.

"At first (this season), I didn't run up and down the court," Pringle said. "I didn't sprint; I did a light trot. Now, I'm running the floor more. In the beginning, when I got the ball I didn't look to shoot. I guess I look for my shot now a little bit."

If Pringle can continue to make a significant contribution off the bench, it could benefit UNC immensely leading up to March.

She, along with McBee, provides valuable rest for the frontcourt of Larkins and Camille Little in addition to helping wear down opposing forwards and centers.

"They're tall and they're athletic," said Hokies forward Kerri Gardin. "That's tough to play against when they just rotate continuously with the height and the athleticism."

That depth stood out Friday — in all, five Tar Heels scored in double figures, and UNC's four-person frontcourt rotation combined for 46 of the team's 93 points.

And you could credit some of that success to Pringle.

"I think my teammates mostly give me confidence," Pringle said. "A lot of them always say how much I'm a big part of this team and that they need me, so I try my hardest every night to do what I can for the time that I'm in there."

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Softball team jumps to 5-0 start

BY RACHEL SODER
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

After scoring five runs in just the third inning Saturday, it looked as though East Tennessee State had North Carolina's number.

Guess again.

The Tar Heels finished up a stellar opening weekend with two come-from-behind victories to claim the Triangle Classic tournament title, held at the UNC Softball complex, and spring to a 5-0 start.

"I was really proud of the team because you're going to face adversity throughout the season," said Coach Donna Papa. "And it showed me a lot of the character that they had facing that adversity."

UNC found itself in trouble early Sunday in the second inning of a matchup against Virginia. After leading the bases with a two-out walk, Tar Heel pitcher Ashley Allen hit Jackie Greer with a pitch for the Cavaliers' first run.

UVa. then put together another

small run in the third, as their lead-off hitter reached on an error and then scored on a liner to left.

But that was all UVa. would get. In seemingly effortless fashion, UNC responded with a single to right from Erin Dudley, followed by another lined single to right by second-baseman Anna Evans that advanced Dudley to third.

Then Tar Heel Jaclyn Holden entered the batter's box. As she had come through so many times during the weekend, Holden again blasted a double from Virginia's Whitney Holston off the wall in right-center field to plate both runners.

"I knew they were going to throw to me because Casey (Testa's) behind me, and she's a great hitter, so I just looked for my pitch and luckily they threw it to me," Holden said.

But the Tar Heels weren't finished. In the very next at bat, Testa smoked a line drive to left field,

scoring Holden as North Carolina defeated Virginia 3-2.

Holden — in her first games back after redshirting last season because of an injury — crushed five doubles in the tournament, including three in the Tar Heels' 7-0 win against Temple on Friday on her way to an all-tournament team selection.

"It feels great to be out there," Holden said. "My teammates are so supportive, and the coaches and the staff and the training room really helped me get back mentally and physically, so it feels great to be out there."

Senior Jessica Young, who belted a two-run homer in the Tar Heels' 7-5 turnaround victory against ETSU, and Cox also garnered all-tournament honors.

"(Cox) is a very competitive pitcher, and I knew that she would keep her composure," Papa said. "I didn't even think about taking her out. I thought, I know she is going to get it done."

Cox delivered three scoreless innings, only allowing one hit in Sunday's game. After giving up five runs in the third inning against the Buccaneers Saturday, Cox slammed the door and gave the Tar Heels an opportunity to come back. Evans also added a solo homer to contribute to UNC's win.

"We maintained really good composure after that inning," Cox said. "We showed a lot of character and a lot of heart and fought back. I was really pleased with our team's performance."

UNC also posted an 8-0 win against UNC-Wilmington on Friday and a 4-1 victory versus Radford on Saturday.

"I think this is a great start to a season that we all predict is going to be one of our best," Holden said. "So we're getting ready right out of the shoot."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Fencers fall in invitational Gowda reaches qualifying mark

Men and women's teams lose at Duke

BY CASEY FERRELL
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — The North Carolina men's fencing team won two of five dual meets, while the women went 1-3 after the Tar Heels faced tough competition at the Duke Invitational this weekend.

Defending national champion Ohio State and perennial powerhouse Notre Dame joined Johns Hopkins and Air Force to round out the field in the regular season-ending event.

There was plenty of drama Friday as the men fenced to a 2-3 record in the tournament. A thrilling win against Air Force came down to the last bout with the match tied at 13 apiece.

North Carolina epee fencer Benton Heimsath found himself in an early 4 to 2 hole in his match, but scored the final three touches to pull out the bout 5-4 and secure a 14-13 win for the Tar Heels.

The Tar Heel men lost to rival Duke in a heartbreaking match in which they came up one bout short, leaving Duke with a 14-13 win.

A 18-9 defeat at the hands of Ohio State showed the toughness and physicality of the North Carolina fencers as they took six of the nine saber bouts, a demanding weapon that calls for shorter but more intense battles between fencers.

It also marks a shift in Miller's attention as he focuses now on preparing his fencers for the postseason. Miller would like to qualify as many as 15 men and women for the upcoming regional tournament in which selection is based on composite player ratings.

Last season's team saw seven of the nine starting women's fencers graduate, so this year's cast of regional qualifiers may include several more men than in the past.

Practices will change somewhat to include more time spent on individual's fencing strategy to better prepare those who qualify for postseason play.

The postseason begins when the Tar Heels travel to Madison, N.J., on March 5 for the Mid-Atlantic South Regionals.

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Tar Heels garner 12 top-5 finishes

FROM WIRE REPORTS

BLACKSBURG, Va. — North Carolina thrower Vikas Gowda won the men's shot put with an NCAA automatic qualifying mark of 62 feet, 4 1/2 inches to lead the North Carolina track and field team at the Virginia Tech Challenge on Saturday in Blacksburg, Va. In addition to Gowda's win, 11 other Tar Heels turned in top-five finishes on the day.

In the women's 55-meter hurdles, Lindsay Bond and Porscha Dobson finished third and fifth, respectively. Bond finished in 7.86 seconds, while Dobson crossed the line in 7.91.

Rhian Jenks and Tatyana Kirichenko shared third place in the women's pole vault. Each cleared the bar at 12 feet, 1 1/2 inches.

In the women's 800-meter run,

Cassie King was fourth in 2 minutes, 15.10 seconds. Kelly Fazekas was third in the shot put with a mark of 47-7.

On the men's side, John Hubbard was second in the high jump with a mark of 6-8 3/4.

Rob Bates took third in the men's 55-meter hurdles in 7.46, while Doug Smith was fourth in the 800 in 1:52.38.

In the long jump, Sheldon Rivens finished third with a mark of 23-7 1/2, while Mike Mason — a UNC wide receiver who recently joined the track team — was fifth with a leap of 23-4 1/2.

On Friday, four Tar Heels turned in NCAA provisional or automatic qualifying marks in the first day of competition.

Bond turning in a provisional qualifying time of 7.78 seconds in the semifinals of the 55-meter hurdles.

Sheena Gordon tied for first in the women's high jump with a leap of 5-10, also a provisional mark. Gordon also took second in the triple jump with a season-best effort of 43-1 3/4, just six inches short of an automatic qualifier.

In other action, Laura Gerraughty added to her school record in the women's weight throw for the third consecutive week. Her second place mark of 68-9 1/4 was almost a foot better than her throw from last week and an automatic NCAA mark.

Noah Cosby took third in the men's pole vault with a mark of 16-6 3/4. Nick Owens threw the 35-pound weight 65-5, his personal best and a provisional qualifier. In addition, his mark moves him to second on the all-time Carolina weight throw list behind Sal Gigante.

North Carolina returns home next weekend as the Tar Heels host the ACC Championships from Thursday through Saturday.

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