

# Men's lacrosse shoots for title

BY DAN SCHWIND  
SENIOR WRITER

Many people look forward to Memorial Day as a weekend to sit back, relax and spend time with family.

But the players and coaches of the North Carolina men's lacrosse team are hoping that instead of being home for the holiday, they'll be in Philadelphia playing for a national title.

"We're really excited about this season," said head coach John Haus. "We have a lot of experience, and we've done a lot of work during the last couple months."

The Tar Heels are looking to capitalize on a strong showing in 2004 that seemed to be a turning point for the program.

Last season, UNC went 10-5 and made its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 1998. There, the team defeated Ohio State 13-6, winning its first tournament game since 1993.

But the team's run came to an end with a loss in the quarterfinals to top-seeded Johns Hopkins, 15-9.

Senior goalkeeper Paul Spellman said UNC's success will depend on the team's seniority if they want to win its first ACC title since 1996 or first national title since 1991.

The team is returning eight of its 10 starters from last year's tournament team, including several seniors.

The senior efforts could be led by

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PAUL SPELLMAN, UNC GOALKEEPER

attackman Jed Prossner and midfielder Bryant Will, who were tapped as preseason All-Americans.

"We have a lot more experience this year," said Prossner, who was a 2004 All-American. "That's huge. ... It's going to take everybody to get (to the championships)."

But while 30 players overall are coming back to the team this year, the Tar Heels still lost some key players to graduation. UNC lost two of three starters on defense, including Matt Pessagno, a two-year starter, and All-America Ronnie Staines.

But Spellman, who finished last season with 180 saves and a 59.6 save percentage, said he is not concerned that there is any loss in the skill of UNC's returning defenders, which will be led by junior Stephen McElduff.

"I will say flat out, McElduff is one of the best in the country," Spellman said. "There's no drop-off from Ronnie to him."

But UNC also has to address the loss of All-American midfielder Kevin Frew, who led the team in faceoffs and the nation in groundballs per game.

"He was great for us," Haus said. "You don't replace a guy like Kevin. He was just amazing."

Prossner, who led UNC with 56 points, shared similar sentiments about the loss of Frew, saying teamwork will be important if the team wants to be strong in faceoffs.

"That's a big hole to fill," Prossner said. "(Junior midfielder) Dave Werry has been doing a great job, but it's going to be important for the midfielders to get in there quickly."

Spellman said it is important to come out strong in the first game against Denver on Feb. 26 and set a trend for the season.

"You come to UNC to play for the best and play against the best," Spellman said. "Game one, we've got to just come out firing on all cylinders."

That game will be the first in a tough schedule for the Tar Heels, ranked seventh in the nation by Lacrosse Magazine.

But much of the team is viewing the grueling schedule as a good preparation if the team wants to be playing in Philadelphia.

"It's tough, but that's what we want," Haus said. "We want the best schedule to make us the best team."

BY WILLIS ISLEY

STAFF WRITER

After a strong spring a year ago, the North Carolina men's and women's golf teams hope to be more of a Vijay Singh-Annika Sorenstam combo than Tiger Woods-Michelle Wie.

That is, they're focusing on results instead of hype.

The men's team is struggling to replace one of its best players of all time in Dustin Bray, who broke the school record for tournament victories. But this year's team may be stronger than last year's from top to bottom.

"We have a lot of depth for a fairly young team," said Coach John Inman. "And I think that our guys are playing at a pretty high level right now, and we just need to get comfortable playing by getting a couple of tournaments under our belts."

A young player who should be a factor for UNC this season is sophomore Martin Ureta, who finished in the top three in three out of five tournaments this fall. Ureta also took home the title in the Tar Heels only home match of the season — the Franklin Street Partners Invitational.

UNC also had a strong fall as a team, winning the Invitational and finishing in the top 10 in four of the five tournaments in which they participated.

Juniors Ted Smith and Kevin Silva played little in the fall but are

back for the spring, adding to the depth of the team.

While the men look to gain experience through plenty of time on the links, the women are looking to increase their competitiveness and are using practice time to nurture an aggressive nature.

"We've worked to create a more competitive atmosphere in practice," said women's head coach Sally Austin. "So, we've created some drills that are a little more competitive, and we think that along with fundamental work, it can make a big difference this year."

Although UNC has no seniors and only two juniors, Romi Irons and Beth Marushak, it also has some young talent that should develop throughout the season in sophomore Katie Miller and freshman Laura Caniff.

"I just hope that every tournament, the team gets better, so that we can continue to improve and place well in the ACC Tournament," Austin said.

The Tar Heels have a long way to go to compete in the difficult ACC — UNC did not finish above fifth place in a tournament this fall. But Austin said the team is improving, and ready to take on the challenges of conference foes.

"Duke — and Wake isn't very far behind — will be very good this year," Austin said. "But we can compete with them, we just have a little way to go."

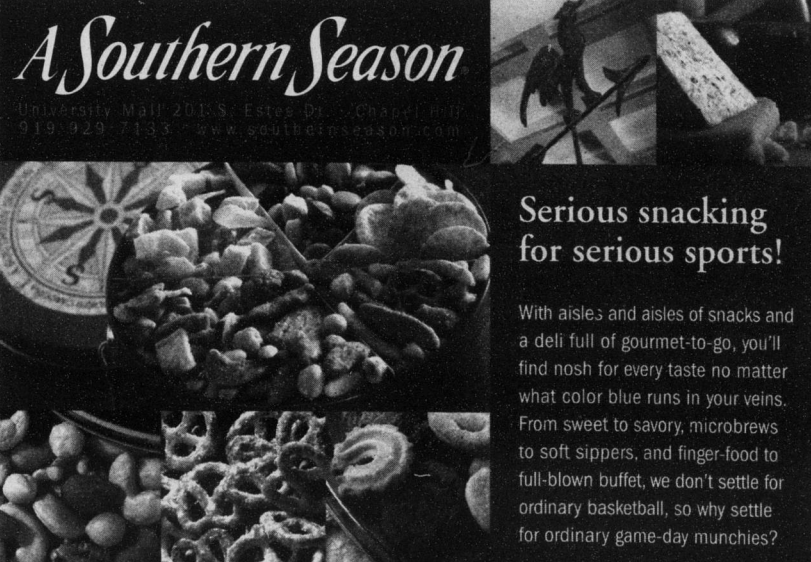


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