

SCOREBOARD

MEN'S TENNIS UNC 6 Elon 1

SOFTBALL Alabama 1 UNC 0

MEN'S SWIMMING Virginia 1st UNC 4th



**BRANDON PARKER**  
GOT THE J-U-ICE

## Conspiracy abounds in pro sports

They're out there, folks. Lurking within the shadows of the money-driven and power-hungry form of entertainment we call sports, there lie conspiracies. Call me stupid, but sometimes the outcome of a game or event can seem too perfect to be accepted as just another captivating moment in sports.

I never considered it until the 1998 NFC Championship game, in which the heavily favored Minnesota Vikings somehow lost to the Atlanta Falcons.

Maybe I'm biased because I'm a Vikings fan, but how did Gary Anderson, who had connected on all 35 of his field goal attempts in the regular season, miss a simple 38-yard kick indoors? And after seeing his Oscar-nominated reaction to the miscue, I began to question the situation.

My guess is the NFL conspirators paid him off to throw the game so the inferior Falcons could advance and become the whipping boys for the AFC champion Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXXIII. As a result, legendary Broncos quarterback John Elway rode off into the sunset of retirement with another Super Bowl ring on his finger.

Still think I'm crazy? Well, I'm not the only one privy to the schemes of professional sports.

During the 2001 NBA Eastern Conference Finals between the Milwaukee Bucks and Philadelphia 76ers, Bucks guard Ray Allen implied that NBA commissioner David Stern forced the referees to make questionable calls against the Bucks so they would lose.

Allen thought the league wanted to ensure that the dream matchup between the 76ers, led by MVP Allen Iverson, and the Los Angeles Lakers occurred in the Finals.

The driving force behind these and other conspiracies is money.

On the surface, professional sports leagues serve the purpose of entertaining their viewers with jaw-dropping plays, close competition and fantastic finishes.

But behind every organization is a corporate world focused on accumulating the maximum amount of dollars in order to satisfy fans with dramatic contests, please players with fat contracts and place prized newcomers in major marketing areas for publicity.

A prime example of such foul play is the 1985 NBA Draft. The most coveted player in the draft pool was Georgetown's Patrick Ewing, and the mecca of the entertainment market is by far the city of New York. So with the Knicks having a chance to win the No. 1 pick, I guess the temptation to conspire was just too great.

Back then, the draft order was decided randomly by picking white envelopes out of a clear globe, and the theory goes that NBA officials froze New York's envelope beforehand so that Stern would know which one to avoid until the final drawing.

In addition to monetary motives, conspiracies can also come about in order to create those "feel-good" moments in sports.

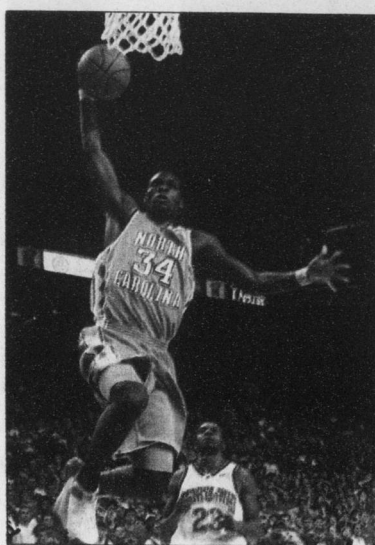
In the 2001 MLB All-Star game, 40-year-old Cal Ripken blasted a solo moonshot off the first pitch he saw from Chan Ho Park. This home run on a perfectly placed fastball was all Ripken needed to win the MVP award in his final all-star contest. Go figure.

Of course, such scheming behavior does not occur on a regular basis since there is only so much the powers that be can do to control athletic activity.

But in America, money talks in ways that some players and organizations can't refuse if they want to survive in the demanding business world of sports.

Maybe the recently canceled NHL should have considered a conspiracy or two.

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North Carolina's David Noel (34) dunks the ball as the Tar Heels held off Maryland 85-83 on Sunday.

## Tar Heels survive Terps

BY DANIEL BLANK  
SENIOR WRITER

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The Comcast Center security guards were in position, waiting for a surge from the student section. The Maryland students were in position, too, poising themselves to storm the court to celebrate the upset that would have likely secured the Terrapins a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

But North Carolina's Sean May was in position as well, sliding to the left block to swat away Mike Jones' potential game-tying shot with three seconds left to preserve a dramatic 85-83 victory for the second-ranked Tar Heels on Sunday.

The win was UNC's second consecutive win without leading scorer Rashad McCants as well

as its second straight road win — giving the Tar Heels a 6-2 road record in the ACC after going 2-6 last year.

**MEN'S BASKETBALL**

UNC 85 Maryland 83

**INSIDE**

Felton sinks shot in final seconds to secure UNC's road victory

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enough to do what you practice every day," said UNC coach Roy Williams. "The toughness is something I preach from day one."

For most of the second half, it looked like North Carolina (24-

3, 12-2 in the ACC) wouldn't need any last-second heroics to close out the sporadic Terrapins (16-10, 7-8). UNC opened a 10-point lead after a first half that was punctuated by a David Noel dunk just before the buzzer and featured eight ties and eight lead changes.

But Maryland hit seven of eight 3-pointers in the second half, led by Chris McCray — who scored 25 points after shooting 3-for-17 against UNC in January — and Jones, who hit four second-half treys.

"They're the number two team in the country, and I want our guys to believe they can play with that, but it takes a lot of work," said Maryland coach Gary Williams.

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*"It's no genius coaching. ... (May is) a youngster who's worked his little — medium sized rear end off."*

**ROY WILLIAMS,**  
UNC COACH



Above: North Carolina's Nikita Bell (30) battles for the ball inside a forest of Duke players during UNC's 77-68 victory against the Blue Devils on Sunday. Below: Ivory Latta (right) wags her tongue at Alex Miller in celebration of UNC's win, which clinched a first-place tie between Duke and the Tar Heels for the ACC regular season title.

## UNC downs Devils for sweep Confident players get boost on court

BY JACOB KARABELL  
SENIOR WRITER

DURHAM — Ivory Latta wouldn't have it any other way. With North Carolina up by five with 1 minute, 17 seconds to go, Nikita Bell picked up a loose ball and dribbled up the court toward the wing. As Bell came to a stop, Latta rushed at her, literally screaming at Bell to put the ball in her hands as the clock drained closer to a UNC victory.

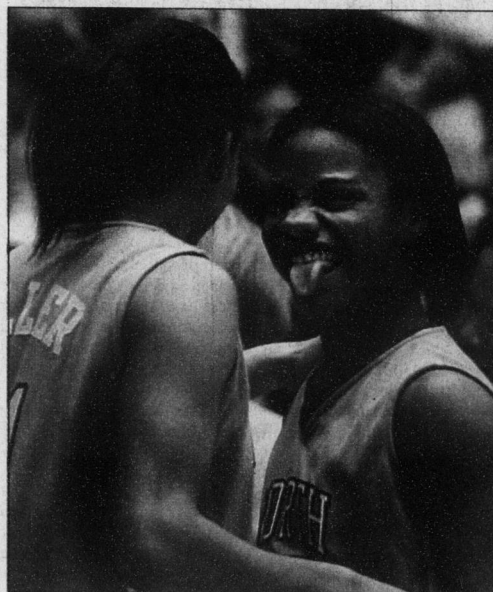
The No. 8 Tar Heels then proceeded to hit almost all of their free throws, sealing a dramatic 77-68 victory against the No. 3 Blue Devils at Cameron Indoor Stadium on Sunday.

With the win, UNC (24-3, 12-2 in the ACC) earned a share of the ACC regular season title, the first time the Tar Heels won the crown since the 1996-97 campaign. They will enter this weekend's ACC Tournament as the top seed thanks to a regular-season sweep of Duke (26-3, 12-2).

"What a great way to end the regular season," said UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell. "Two great teams, hard-fought battle all the way until the end. I was just proud of our team. I thought it was a great team effort."

Latta's insistence to hold the ball in the game's latter stages occurred for good reason — in addition to leading the ACC in free throw percentage (.912), she had just hit a shot to quell Duke's growing home-court momentum.

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DTH/SARA LEWKOWICZ

BY GABRIELLE DE ROSA  
SENIOR WRITER

DURHAM — The North Carolina women's basketball team might be taking its own form of injections — the legal kind, of course.

The Tar Heels now sit atop the ACC rankings and hover at the high end of national polls, and UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said it's thanks to a booster shot of confidence and self-esteem.

"We beat the defending national champions — Connecticut. We beat Duke when they were No. 1 at our place, we've had a couple of real

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## 'Pack snaps gymnasts' win streak

BY MARY DUBY  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Considering the extremely close nature of the three contests between the North Carolina and N.C. State gymnastics teams this season, it seemed almost fitting that the Wolfpack handed UNC its first loss of the year.

While the Tar Heels (13-1-1) had to count a fall on the uneven bars, they managed to score a solid 195.025 on Sunday at Carmichael Auditorium. But the total was not enough to beat out N.C. State (11-3-1), which put up a score of 195.50.

"Certainly we want to outscore

every opponent we face," said UNC coach Derek Galvin. "We don't like letting someone else outscore us, particularly in our own house. But State had their best meet, not of just this year, but of several years."

In Raleigh on Friday night, the two teams tied at a score of 194.475. It was the first time either program had ever exactly matched its competitor's score.

"I've never seen it before," Galvin said. "It's a great situation to be in, knowing that you've got a cross town rival that's going to push you."

The Tar Heels defeated the

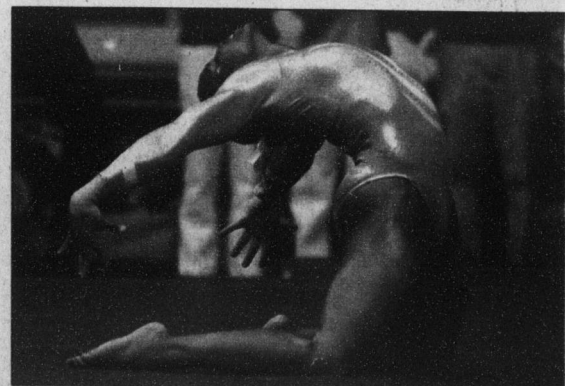
Wolfpack in their first meeting by two-tenths of a point at the Governors Cup on Feb. 5.

Despite the loss, the UNC squad was pleased with its final score, which was its third highest of the year.

"We'll take a 195," said senior Elisabeth Alsop. "We didn't have the best meet we've ever had, but I think we had a lot of improvements. ... (The score) was definitely good for what we did."

The event also marked the last time the seniors performed on their home floor. The group of Alsop,

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North Carolina gymnast Olivia Trusty competes in the floor exercise Sunday. The Tar Heels suffered their first loss of the season as they fell to N.C. State.

DTH/SARA LEWKOWICZ