

SPORTS CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 14

**MEN'S SOCCER**  
at N.C. State, 7 p.m.  
SAS Soccer Park (Cary)

BLOGGIN'

**BUNTING BLOTTER**  
Check out some tidbits and observations from Assistant Sports Editor Derek Howles from his trip to Atlanta for last Saturday's football game against Georgia Tech go to: <http://apps.dailytarheel.com/blogs/pressbox.php>

# Running backs fail to impress in opener

## Starting position remains unsettled

BY DEREK HOWLES  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Before North Carolina's season opener against Georgia Tech, Coach John Bunting was aggravated by a rumor that Barrington Edwards lost the starting tailback spot because of a couple of speeding tickets.

After watching Edwards and Cooter Arnold alternate series in Saturday's 27-21 loss, though, no one's ready to hand out any speeding tickets to the UNC rushing game — not for its play on the field, at least.

As it was, Arnold got the nomi-

nal start, but it really didn't matter, as the Tar Heels' backfield tandem racked up a grand total of 50 yards (nine carries for 28 yards by Arnold, seven carries for 22 yards by Edwards for a measly 3.1 yard average each).

But neither Arnold, a freshman, nor Edwards, a sophomore transfer who was widely assumed to top the depth chart, had ever played so much as a down of football as a Tar Heel — a reason Bunting wasn't as frustrated as he might otherwise have been.

"We had two runners out there that haven't played football at the

Division I level in a long time," he said in a teleconference Sunday. "So that's going to take some live-action to get in the flow of things. We've got to be able to run the ball. ... We only ran it 26 times."

But the Tar Heels' penchant for digging themselves a hole early in a series — be it with a penalty (they had six for 43 yards on offense) or with a sack (the Yellow Jackets had two for 27 yards) — left them constantly facing third-and-long situations where airing it out was the only option.

"There weren't too many situations where we had 'em guessing pass/run," senior quarterback Matt Baker said after the game. "(We were) hurt on first

down, when we could be at second-and-short. We could get a running game going on second-and-short but we shot ourselves in the foot."

And though UNC's ineffectiveness in the ground game was largely due to circumstances beyond the duo's control, Bunting said he saw nothing in their performances to indicate who will be the starter as the season progresses.

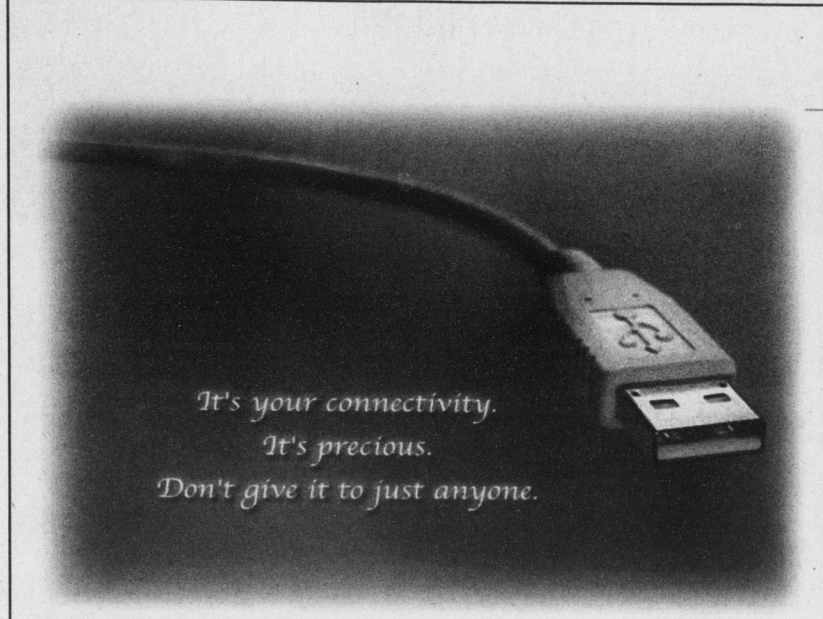
"We have seen Cooter evolve into a back that we want to give opportunities to, and we decided to throw him out there to begin the game," Bunting said in his postgame press conference. "Barrington's got work to do to

earn the right to be the starter. He's gonna play — I'm going to give him those opportunities, just as he got them today. So he needs to earn the job, Cooter can continue to earn the job. In my mind that is an open-ended running back situation right now."

The coach hesitated for a moment, and then, in a subtle jab at the media members with whom he became frustrated earlier in the week, raised both hands to form quotation marks.

"I'm going to let those guys determine who is the so-called 'starter.'"

Contact the Sports Editor at [sports@unc.edu](mailto:sports@unc.edu).



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