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STREICH ZONE

A Devilish rivalry has been born

Rivalries don't exist when one team wins 60 of the 70 games ever played.

They certainly don't exist when one team goes 22 years without ever beating the other.

And they definitely don't exist when it takes nearly a quarter-century for a team to stroll into the opposing squad's stadium and steal a win on its home turf.

But any time North Carolina or Duke makes the shortest drive in the ACC to face the other, the uncomfortable closeness and ingrained hatred should prevail regardless of history, right?

Well, when the Tar Heels and Blue Devils face off in field hockey, it usually isn't a question of "if" UNC will trounce those poor sops from Durham — it's a question of "how badly."

In fact, North Carolina's domination of the Blue Devils in field hockey has been so consistent that the Tar Heels don't consider Duke to be their top rival. That distinction goes to Old Dominion. And North Carolina might even harbor more bad blood for perennial-top-five program Wake Forest than for Duke.

At least, that used to be the case.

All of those jaw-dropping numbers mentioned above — they need to be accompanied by an asterisk — a Carnie Wilson-sized asterisk (pre-gastric-bypass).

In falling to the Blue Devils, 2-1, Friday at Henry Stadium, the Tar Heels are in the midst of a disturbing trend.

Despite holding a 60-9-1 all-time record against Duke, North Carolina has dropped four of the last five contests against its nearest neighbor. A 5-0 shutout in October 2003 ended Duke's 22-year drought, and the Blue Devils won in the ACC Tournament later that year.

And the game that really ignited this dead-as-disco rivalry — last November's 2-1 stunner in the second round of the NCAA Tournament — ended top-ranked North Carolina's season.

"When I first came to Carolina, I don't think it was as much of a rivalry," said senior goalkeeper Katy Tran. "We hadn't lost to Duke in years. Now, they're a powerhouse."

Especially after its most recent win in Chapel Hill, it appears the Duke program has finally pulled even with the Tar Heels — and perhaps has even surpassed them.

"Duke's come on very strongly, and I think they've recruited well," said UNC coach Karen Shelton. "And they're playing hard and tough ... They've just gotten a little bit better the last few years."

In the realm of Carolina-Duke athletic rivalries, "Field Hockey: The Final Frontier" finally seems to fit. The majority of sports in which this rivalry unfolds feature typically well-matched and ultra-competitive confrontations. Given the rise of Duke field hockey in the past two seasons, the Tar Heels might be able to cast aside non-descript ODU and finally insert the Blue Devils as a sexier chief foe — the way it should be.

Gone are the days when playing Duke in field hockey was significant only because the two were token rivals.

"It's always disappointing to lose, especially at home, especially to Duke," Tran said.

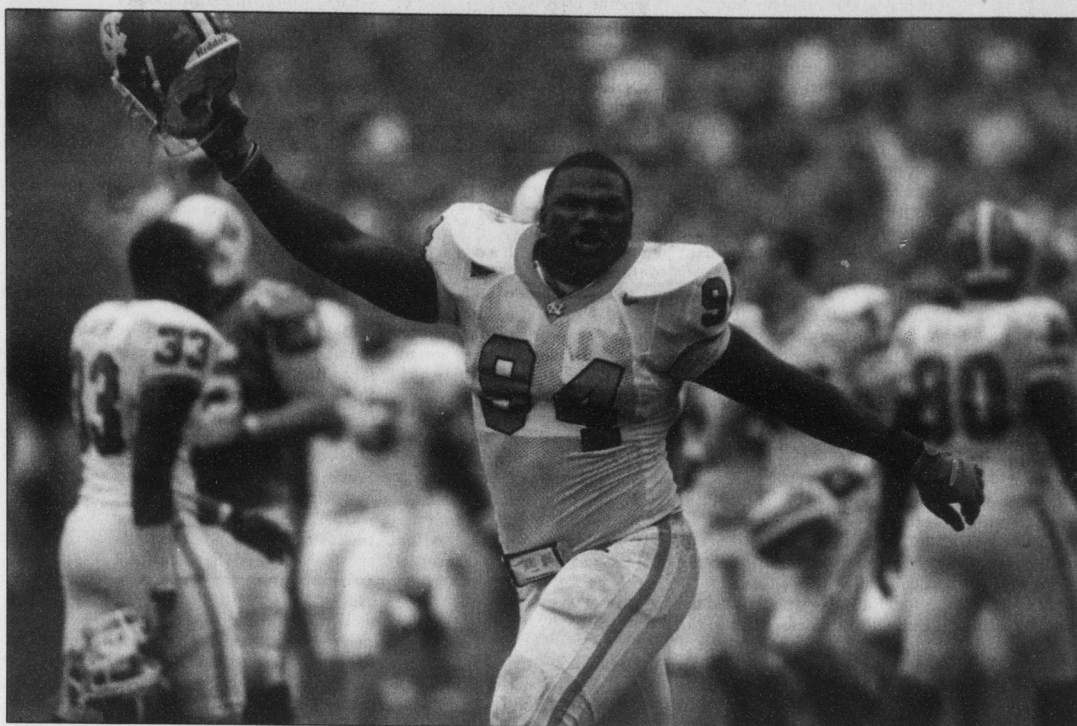
Now with the balance of power equal and the rivalry palpable, those losses are tipping the scales from embarrassingly rare to justifiably frequent.

Whether or not Duke can achieve a reversal of North Carolina's dominance, for now this rivalry is here to stay.

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UNC 31 N.C. STATE 24

AFTERNOON DELIGHT



North Carolina defensive tackle Khalif Mitchell (94) celebrates the Tar Heel's 31-24 victory against N.C. State on Saturday afternoon. Mitchell, and the rest of the UNC defensive front, held the Wolfpack to a mere 13 rushing yards, the fewest the team has allowed in almost five years.

BY BRIAN MACPHERSON
SENIOR WRITER

RALEIGH — This, they'd seen before.

Two seasons ago, North Carolina put up a valiant effort to hang tough for one half at Carter-Finley Stadium before a blown coverage paved the way for an N.C. State touchdown and eventual rout.

Faced with a similar situation Saturday, however, the Tar Heels wouldn't let that happen. With a quarterback who suddenly couldn't miss and defenders who suddenly wouldn't relent, North Carolina stormed back

from the brink of disaster for a 31-24 win.

"They have confidence, they believe that they can win and they prepare well," said UNC coach John Bunting. "As long as you do those things, you always have a chance."

But early in the third quarter it didn't appear the Tar Heels (1-2, 1-1 in the ACC) had a chance.

N.C. State quarterback Jay Davis found a wide-open T.J. Williams for an easy 39-yard touchdown and a 24-14 lead, and the Wolfpack (1-2, 0-2) appeared to be cruising to a repeat of 2003.

To make matters worse, a short run and an incomplete pass left North Carolina facing a critical third down deep in its own territory. Quarterback Matt Baker hadn't completed a pass in nearly 17 minutes of action, and his receivers showed no signs of coming to his rescue any time soon.

And with seven yards to go for the first down, the senior had to throw the ball.

"When you're in second-and-long, third-and-long, it's a pass," he said. "Everyone in the stadium knows it's a pass."

With his receivers spread wide and his offensive line providing perfect protection, Baker stepped forward and rifled an 11-yard pass to Mike Mason across the middle.

First down, and the Tar Heels were back in business. Three complete passes and three Barrington Edwards runs later, they scored a tide-turning touchdown.

"Maybe they thought, 'We've got 'em now. We've got 'em now,'" said Wolfpack coach Chuck Amato. "But we didn't. That's why the game lasts

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Edwards busts out with career game

BY JACOB KARABELL
SENIOR WRITER

RALEIGH — A minute into Saturday's game, Barrington Edwards tied his career high for rushing in a game.

After the transfer from LSU plowed up the middle for four yards on North Carolina's first offensive play, the coaching staff called Edwards' number again on second down.

Shortly thereafter, the Tar Heels had advanced from their own 24-yard line to the N.C. State 14, a blistering 62-yard run that helped Edwards equal his 66-yard effort in a 49-10 LSU victory against Louisiana Tech on Nov. 1, 2003.

"That's been my longest run of my college career, so I was excited,"

Edwards said. "I could have walked through that hole — they had great blocking up front."

At that juncture, observers might have wondered if this was the same North Carolina ground attack that sputtered through its first two games of the season. Edwards accumulated 22 yards on seven carries against Georgia Tech in the season opener, and the sophomore upped that to 37 yards on 11 tries against Wisconsin on Sept. 17.

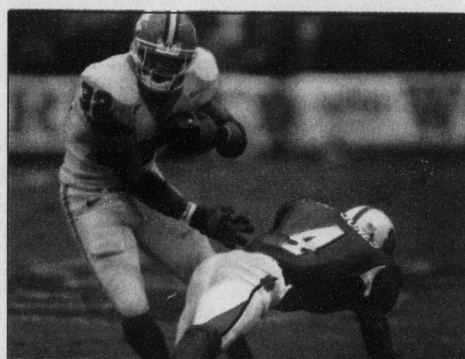
Yet, when quarterback Matt Baker placed the ball in Edwards' hands on the game's second play, an adjustment by the Tar Heels' offensive line helped Edwards to break into the wide-open left side of the Carter-Finley Stadium field.

The Wolfpack had positioned their linebackers more to the right than UNC expected, setting up the planned right-to-left run perfectly. This shift permitted center Steven Bell to nullify the safety instead of a linebacker, creating considerable space for Edwards before Wolfpack safety Miguel Scott finally caught up with him downfield.

"That was pretty big," Bell said. "Everyone got their man, everyone did their assignment and Barrington just went through there and ran down the field. It really got the offense fired up. It set the tone for the game on offense."

Edwards went on to tally another

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North Carolina running back Barrington Edwards (32) dodges would-be 'Pack tackler J.J. Jones (4) during Saturday's game.

UNC tops Tigers despite another 1st-half snooze

BY DEREK HOWLES
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Five minutes before North Carolina's men's soccer game Friday, the stands at Fetzer Field were mostly empty.

Sure, the band had managed to cobble together a few tuba players and a guy with cymbals

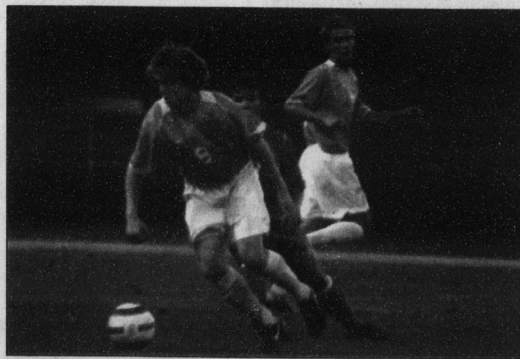
and even some woodwinds to play the national anthem. But that was only

about 20 members — and about a third of the attendance.

The starting lineups were read, and people clapped. About five people. You could tell because you could hear the different sound each one made.

But after 10 minutes had elapsed, a few more people were there. And then a few more. And by halftime the bleachers were tending less toward empty and more toward full.

Maybe they had the right



North Carolina midfielder Dax McCarty (8), who assisted on the game's only goal, slices the defense in Friday's 1-0 win against Clemson.

idea: skip the first half, which typically has been boring, and show up for the second, which typically has had scoring.

It was — no surprise here — a tale of two halves for the No. 3 Tar Heels again, as they got a goal from freshman midfielder Scott Campbell in the

62nd minute and held off 17th-ranked Clemson for a 1-0 win and their best start since 1991, when they also began the year 6-0-1.

"For some reason we've been dead in the first half, like

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Duke outduels Tar Heels late in game

Radford feels wrath of determined field hockey team in blowout victory

BY AL KILLEFFER
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

The North Carolina field hockey team was not pleased Friday night after its 2-1 loss to Duke at Henry Stadium — it was the team's first loss of the season and it came at the hands of its arch-rivals.

When the Blue Devils tied the score just six minutes into the second half, the fans moved to the edge of their seats and remained there for the rest of the game.

But when Duke pulled ahead with only 1:13 remaining, their hopes were dashed.

Those members of the crowd that returned for UNC's game on Sunday, however, witnessed a much different display. Still steaming from Friday's loss, the Tar Heels used unranked Radford as a punching bag, outshooting the Highlanders, 18-4,

happen again." After a productive first half in which the Tar Heels outshot their Tobacco Road rivals, 5-1, putting them ahead, 1-0, they had trouble scoring again in the second, while trying to deal with a re-energized Duke squad at the same time.

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