

UNC stabs Lancers in big win Stepheson adds to talented class

BY JESSE BAUMGARTNER
STAFF WRITER

For one brief moment it looked like underdog Longwood had stunned the North Carolina men's soccer team with an early opening goal.

Then Justin Hughes flashed into the picture.

The junior goalkeeper, making his first start of the year, made a diving save of a shot from point-blank range by Longwood's Elvis Cosic 10 minutes into the game.

MEN'S SOCCER
Longwood 0
UNC 5

The stop started a lightning-quick counter attack that gave the No. 5 Tar Heels (9-2-1) their first goal in a 5-0 win against the Lancers (2-8-1) Tuesday night in front of 423 at Fetzer Field.

Hughes played his first minutes in goal all year in place of senior Ford Williams and faced only five shots, recording his seventh career shutout.

"We haven't given him time yet, and it was his time today," said UNC coach Elmar Bolowich. "He played a full 90 minutes, and I'm glad he did. And I'm glad he had a shutout."

Hughes, who admitted to being a little nervous before the game, made only one save — but it was a big one.

"At the point, it was somewhat critical because we ended up scoring on the next play," Hughes said.

And that play happened 28 seconds later.

Midfielder Brian Shriver took



DTH/KATE LORD

North Carolina freshman Stephen Bickford speeds toward the goal in the Tar Heels' 5-0 blowout of Longwood on Tuesday at Fetzer Field.

a pass from fellow freshman Scott Campbell at the top of the box and was able to push it past Longwood goalkeeper Brandt Youmans.

"I looked up for Scott, got a wall pass and was 1-on-1 with the goalie and just tapped it by him," Shriver said.

UNC tallied its second goal of the first half on a rebound by junior defender Ted Odgers after a hard shot from the top of the box by David Boole.

Playing with a large lead, the Tar Heels cruised through the final 45 minutes of play, denying the Lancers any real chance to score.

Junior striker Ben Hunter came off the bench to score two second-half goals, and Campbell added his team-leading sixth goal of the year in a season-high five-goal effort by North Carolina.

Bolowich said "looking to play balls forward to the front line

quicker was the emphasis" coming into the game, and after two conference losses in their last three games, the Tar Heels needed to get back on the right foot.

Shriver confirmed Tuesday's win was a statement game for UNC, saying the team "needed to just come out and whip something."

The win sends the Tar Heels on a four-game road trip, starting with a Friday night contest with Maryland.

And the upcoming stretch figures to be an important indicator of how the remainder of the UNC season will play out.

"It's a good test," Bolowich said. "It's not like we haven't done it in the past, so we don't look at it as necessarily a detriment to go on the road. It's just another game for us."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

BY DANIEL MALLOY
SPORTS EDITOR

Forward Alex Stepheson gave a verbal commitment Tuesday to play basketball at North Carolina, a decision that solidifies Roy Williams' 2006 recruiting class as one of the best in the country.

Stepheson, who is ranked as the No. 58 prospect in the nation by Scout.com, will provide frontcourt depth when he arrives in 2006-07 and is another piece in an increasingly impressive puzzle.

"He is an excellent complementary post player to what they already have," said Dave Telep, national recruiting director for Scout.com. "He has a big, strong,

athletic body."

Stepheson followed in the footsteps of fellow Californian Deon Thompson, who committed to North Carolina last week. Thompson is ranked as the No. 22 recruit in the country, and Telep said he and current freshman Tyler Hansbrough should be the foundation of UNC's post game next year.

The addition of the 6-foot-9 post player lessens the blow somewhat for Roy Williams' staff of the loss of blue-chip center Spencer Hawes, who recently picked Washington instead of UNC. The seven-footer is ranked No. 3 in the nation.

"I don't think you ever forget about missing out on Spencer Hawes," Telep said. "Because he's good enough to carry a team to a national championship."

But even without Hawes, Telep ranked UNC's class second in the nation behind Ohio State, based mostly on its all-world backcourt commitments.

Future Tar Heels Wayne Ellington, a shooting guard, and Tywon Lawson, a point guard from Virginia basketball factory Oak

Hill, are considered to be the best prospects at their respective positions, which usually would mean they are NBA-bound.

But thanks to a new ruling that says players cannot enter the NBA Draft until a year after their high school class has graduated, Lawson and Ellington must spend at least a year in Chapel Hill — unlike former UNC signee J.R. Smith.

Williams now has one projected scholarship remaining, and he probably will use it on another big man. North Carolina has offered scholarships to top-15 prospects Brandon Wright, Thaddeus Young and Darrell Arthur, all of whom are 6-foot-8 or taller.

And even if Williams doesn't land one of those three, Telep said next year's Tar Heel squad should be an instant contender.

Said Telep: "I firmly believe that the class that North Carolina is bringing in gives them an opportunity to compete to be the best team in the country."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

SPORTS CALENDAR TODAY

■ **SWIMMING & DIVING**
at Georgia, 2 p.m.
Athens, Ga.

■ **WOMEN'S SOCCER**
at Boston College, 7 p.m.
Newton, Mass.

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