

No. 9 UNC splits weekend matches

BY JESSE BAUMGARTNER STAFF WRITER

Categorizing the ACC as a strong men's tennis conference this year definitely would qualify as an understatement.

Dominant would be the more operative word, as nine out of its 12 teams reside in the top 36 spots of the latest national rankings.

North Carolina ran into two of those nine Friday and Sunday during its Florida road trip. The No. 9 Tar Heels emerged with a split decision after handing then-No. 27 Florida State a 5-2 defeat and suffering only their second loss of the season against then-No. 13 Miami, 4-1.

"We played really well against Florida State, and really focused," said UNC coach Sam Paul. "Then you've got to give Miami credit; they just played a little bit too good for us on the road — we learned some things."

"I think we can play better." The Miami match was the first time all year that the Tar Heels have failed to win after taking the doubles point.

"They're just really talented," Paul said. "I think they know that they're a really talented team. And they're fighters; they're a well-coached team — you've got to be able to adjust to that."

Senior Raian Luchici said he was pleased with the win against FSU and mentioned a few factors that might have contributed to the loss at Miami.

"We had to get used to the weather and the court pretty fast because we traveled in one day," he said. "We were) maybe a little bit tired."

While the team did not seem to

be too disappointed, it was evident that the .500 record on the road trip was not what anyone was looking for either.

"Definitely not satisfied at all," said senior Derek Porter. "But it was a tough road trip and Miami's a good team. So you've got to give them some credit. But we didn't play as well as we could have, a little banged up, but it looks like we're injury-free right now."

The loss at Miami gives UNC an 18-2 record on the season and a 3-2 showing in the conference. With No. 8 Virginia and No. 6 Duke still left on the schedule, the Tar Heels certainly have their work cut out for them.

"It's a tough league, I mean you've got to go to compete every single day, and you've got to get better every single day," Paul said. "How many teams we got in the top 25 right now?"

But before its showdowns with the other top 10 schools, UNC first has to worry about its matchup with No. 36 N.C. State (19-5, 2-4) today.

"N.C. State's coming in here tomorrow, and they've got the best team they've had record-wise since 1978, 1979," Paul said. "So they're a very good team."

And despite the Tar Heels' impressive ranking and record, Luchici pointed out that the team has other things to worry about.

"It feels good to have two losses for the season, but we try to not focus as much on losses and wins as much as doing our objectives of working the hardest in the country and playing the hardest," he said.

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

Baseball team torches Phoenix in 9-1 victory

BY BRANDON STATON ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Despite the passing of former coach Walter Rabb early Tuesday, the No. 5 North Carolina baseball team was able to do what it did 540 times during his 31-year tenure — the Tar Heels won.

"Coach Rabb — he loved Carolina baseball," said UNC coach Mike Fox. "There's nothing more that he would want than on the day of his passing for us to go out and play and get a win."

After a moment of silence before the national anthem, the Tar Heel offense made plenty of noise — pounding out 12 hits in their 9-1 triumph against Elon (22-11) at Boshamer Stadium.

Four hitters in the UNC lineup had multihit games, led by infielders Reid Fronk and Garrett Gore and outfielders Jay Cox and Matt Spencer. The foursome combined to go 8-for-12 with seven RBIs and

accounted for all but one of the Tar Heels' runs.

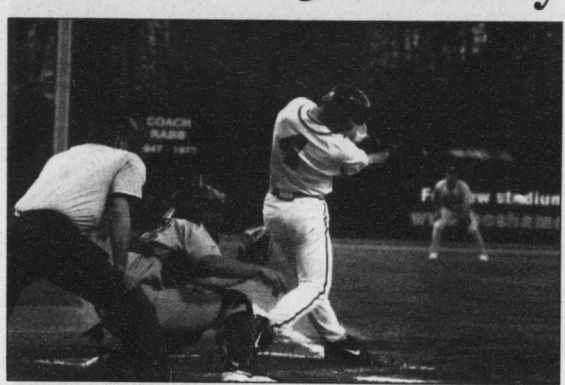
"It's a long season; you're not going to be hot the whole year," Fronk said. "I feel real good right now, coming off a pretty good weekend, and I'm just trying to put something together here and have a nice, little hot streak, hopefully."

Fronk hit his fifth homer of the year in the fourth inning — already tying the best mark of his career. The sophomore is a staple in the Tar Heels' leadoff spot and has been getting UNC (24-6) off on the right foot of late as it prepares for an important ACC matchup this weekend at Miami.

The sophomore third baseman is 6-for-16 in his last four games and has scored five runs during that time — two via the long ball.

"I don't even know if we've played our best baseball of the year yet," he said.

Redshirt freshman Luke Putkonen kept his record perfect, picking up his fourth win in only five innings. The right-hander was



UNC's Garrett Gore (4) connects for one of his 2 hits Tuesday in the Tar Heels' 9-1 win against Elon. Gore collected 2 RBIs and a run in the win.

pulled after back-to-back walks to start the sixth inning.

"A few fastballs got away from me, but I felt pretty good all day," he said. "I threw a bunch of low strikes and was able to get some ground balls."

Fox said he kept his regular midweek starter under an 80-pitch count in hopes of keeping him rested enough to use him out of the bullpen should the Tar Heels run into early pitching troubles against Miami — as they did against Florida State on Sunday.

"He's progressing to the point where we would feel very comfort-

able throwing him on a weekend," Fox said. "He'll be on the travel list right now to go to Miami."

Before heading south, though, Fox continues to have concerns about the team's intangibles — which cost the team a sweep of FSU last weekend.

"It didn't really matter tonight, but you don't know when it's going to matter," he said. "We have to improve on those little things in the game."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

SPORTS CALENDAR

TODAY Baseball vs. Davidson vs. Elon Softball vs. Elon

Men's tennis vs. N.C. State Women's tennis at Duke

REGAL CINEMAS listing movies like ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN, INSIDE MAN, V FOR VENDETTA.

The Lumina listing movies like ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN, INSIDE MAN, V FOR VENDETTA.

VOYAGES Into TRANSCENDENCE advertisement by Raymond Neubauer.

Interested in promoting Carolina's varsity Olympic sports? CAA Sports Marketing Committee.

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