

UNC looks to rebound vs. upstart Miami

Hansbrough, outside game are key

BY JESSE BAUMGARTNER
SENIOR WRITER

The 2007-08 Miami Hurricanes are just another piece of evidence for the "why preseason media polls are worthless" campaign.

Picked by the press as the second worst team in the ACC, Miami enters tonight's contest against UNC at 14-3, with quality wins against Virginia Commonwealth University, Mississippi State and Georgia Tech. Plus, the 'Canes easily could have come out on top against N.C. State on Saturday in an overtime thriller.

Not surprisingly, Miami is depending on the scoring capabilities of junior guard Jack McClinton. While McClinton's nonscoring stats are rather unimpressive, he can light it up from the outside in a hurry — carrying a swish-filled .466 3-point percentage into the game.

In general, scoring has not been a big problem for Miami, which averages a respectable 76.8 points per game for the season. But even though the 'Canes are giving up just 62.8 points per game for the year, that number has jumped to 74.3 points during their three ACC games. Not a great sign for anyone playing the high-powered Tar Heels.

Clang, Clack, Clong

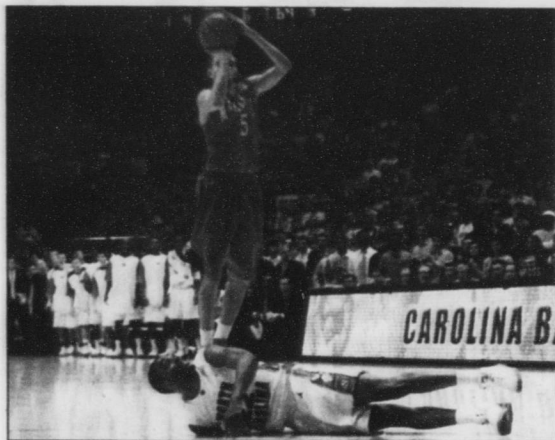
The beginning of the season saw the Tar Heels displaying some fine marksmanship from the outside courtesy of Wayne Ellington and Danny Green. But in the past two games against Maryland and Georgia Tech, Ellington is shooting just 34.6 percent from the field while Green is worse at an even 30 percent.

Three-point shooting from the two has been even worse. Ellington is just 25 percent beyond the arc in the last two games while Green has missed his last 10 long bombs. Not surprisingly, the Tar Heels as a team have shot 30.4 and 20 percent, respectively, from downtown during their last two games.

UNC already ranks ninth in the ACC in 3-pointers made, and considering that Ellington and Green take the most threes on the team, they'll have the biggest say in whether that trend gets turned around.

Hansbrough collecting stats

While every move Tyler Hansbrough makes this year seems to be analyzed by every major sports network in America, the junior continues to put up impressive numbers.



OTHWALLIE MULLIN
Maryland's Eric Hayes shoots over North Carolina's Wayne Ellington during Maryland's 82-80 victory against UNC on Saturday in Chapel Hill.

He is currently averaging a double-double with 21.3 points and 10.2 rebounds a game, shooting better than 80 percent from the line, averaging 9.89 free throws per game and playing 31.1 minutes a contest.

But perhaps the most important improvements to his game were on display during the second half against Maryland. During one sequence, Hansbrough drained a long jumper, drove to the hoop for

a big slam, sunk a 12-footer on the baseline and then converted a tough layup over multiple defenders.

Maryland coach Gary Williams compared the way Hansbrough uses angles to former Terrapin star Lonny Baxter and said, "If he starts making those jump shots, it is really going to be a problem."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

THE LOWDOWN ON TONIGHT'S GAME

No. 5 North Carolina at Miami
BankUnited Center, 9 p.m.
Broadcast: Raycom
Radio: 1360 WCHL
(18-1, 3-1 ACC) (14-3, 1-2 ACC)

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Backcourt UM's Jack McClinton needs another N.C. State game performance — 26 points — to give the 'Canes a boost. Ty Lawson's 100 assists this season prove he can not only create for himself but also his team. **Edge: UNC**

Frontcourt It's hard to win the frontcourt battle when Tyler Hansbrough is in the lineup. He leads the ACC in scoring with 21.3 points per game while UM's leading big man, Anthony King, only puts up a dismal 8.5 points. **Edge: UNC**

Bench UNC's reserves already have posted 16 double-digit scoring performances this year. Danny Green continues to play a big role as the Tar Heels' ever-impressive sixth man as the team's fourth-leading scorer. **Edge: UNC**

Intangibles Both UNC and Miami were on the receiving end of two-point losses this weekend. UM was ousted from the polls, but expect the No. 5 Tar Heels to bounce back after its 18-game winning streak was halted. **Edge: UNC**

The Bottom Line — North Carolina 89, Miami 77

COMPILED BY NICOLE LUKOSIUS

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THE CAROLINA INN - ALUMNI ROOM
RSVP by January 27th to margaret.a.bugbes@nmfn.com

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