

DTH FILE PHOTO

The North Carolina women's lacrosse team opened the season with an exhibition game against George Washington during UNC's South of the Border Tournament. UNC is looking to return to the NCAA elite eight.

Youthful offense to pace Tar Heels

BY POWELL LATIMER

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

At first glance, 2008 looks to be a rebuilding year in Chapel Hill.

After losing five starters, three All-Americans and a national defensive player of the year, the North Carolina women's lacrosse team has some serious holes to fill.

But more important might be the pieces they already have.

Returning in 2008 is last year's leading goal scorer, sophomore Kristen Taylor. By the end of her freshman season last year, Taylor not only worked her way into the starting lineup, but she did it as a focal point of the offense, scoring 14 of her 43 goals in the postseason.

"Oh, (Taylor's) great," coach Jenny Levy said. "She's as competitive as they come, and we'll really look for her to provide scoring like she did for us last year."

At times during the end of last season, Taylor had a way of taking over games — such as in the first round of the ACC tournament against Virginia Tech, when she scored five goals. Her teammates expect more of the same this season.

"I can definitely see that again; she can take over a game," senior

Women's lacrosse

Key players:

- Sophomore Kristen Taylor
- Sophomore Megan Bosica
- Junior Amber Falcone

Key games:

- Feb. 17 vs. Denver
- March 16 at Virginia
- March 22 vs. Duke

Erica LaGrow said. "She's a great leader as well."

The good news for North Carolina is that Taylor will be leading a supporting class that includes her favorite partner from last year, fellow sophomore Megan Bosica. Bosica led the team in assists with 18 and will start again in 2008.

That tandem is combined with a couple of players who flashed explosive potential off the bench in 2007, as well as a loaded freshman class, notably Corey Donohoe, who already has impressed coaches with her abilities.

"Corey's gonna be starting for us from the get-go this season," Levy said. "She's an unbelievable finisher, a strong kid."

"We're just better than we were last year offensively, which we needed to be, and we're excited about that."

On the defensive side of the ball, there are a few more questions to be answered. After losing 2006 National Defender of the Year Jenn Cook and two-time All-America goalie Kristen Hordy, the Tar Heels will be relying on their one remaining All-America — junior Amber Falcone.

Falcone already has established herself as a leader on the defense.

"She has really stepped up this year," LaGrow said. "She's a motivational leader. I look at Amber and I follow whatever she's doing, so she's a great leader back there."

In goal, UNC has two extremely serviceable options in senior Amanda Barnes and sophomore Logan Ripley, both of whom performed well as substitutes in 2007.

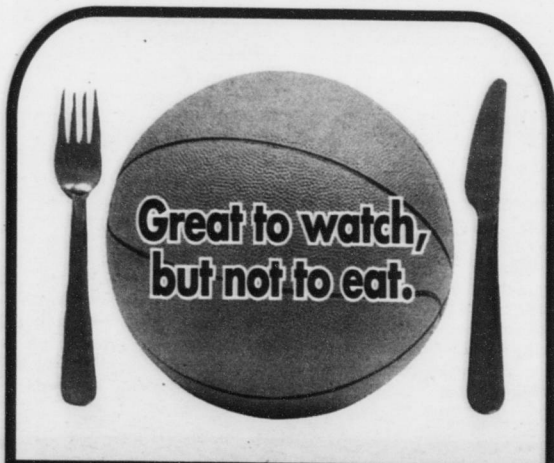
"I'm really liking where we are as a group," Levy said. "Our chemistry is very good; practice sessions are really focused."

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