

Tar Heels breeze to win against NCSU

CHRIS HEMPSON
STAFF WRITER

As the North Carolina men's tennis team sat at a record of 4-3 on Feb. 16, UNC coach Sam Paul decided to send his team a message.

"Mainly, I told them to compete better, to compete harder," he said.

"Sometimes to get your tail kicked is a good thing for you. It woke us up a little bit, made us look at the small stuff."

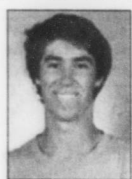
Or in essence, to stress the little things.

Through patience and hard work the team has gone on a remarkable run since then, taking nothing for granted along the way.

And Wednesday against in-state rival N.C. State, nothing changed as the No. 10 Tar Heels (15-3, 5-0 in the ACC) won their 11th straight match, 5-2.

And as usual, the match was all about the little things.

Little things like sophomore Stefan Hardy charging a seemingly improbable drop shot in his single's match against N.C. State's Nick



Sophomore Chris Kearney helped lead the Tar Heels to victory with a straight-set singles win.

Cavaday. The ball was inches from the ground, yet Hardy extended his racket and volleyed the ball into the back right corner, winning the point.

Little things like sophomore Clay Donato realizing on slam opportunities to place the ball in between his opponents during doubles play. So much so that neither foe even attempted to return the shot.

And because of such actions Wednesday at the Cone-Kenfield Tennis Center, North Carolina was not to be denied.

The UNC No. 10 doubles pairing of sophomore Chris Kearney and junior Taylor Fogleman started the

dominance with their 8-2 defeat of

Cavaday and Jay Weineker, the team ranked one spot ahead of them in the national rankings.

The success continued in singles play, with Kearney winning his match in consecutive sets 6-2, 6-3.

The team finished off the scoring with Hardy and senior Will Plyler displaying strong showings en route to victory. Hardy used his ever-impressive forehand with relative ease, winning 6-1, 6-4, while Plyler used the accuracy of the baseline to place shots that left his opponent befuddled, scoring victory 6-3, 6-4.

After today's victory, the team will finally be able to focus on Friday's match against rival Virginia, the No. 1 ranked team in the nation. The team looks to avenge last year's two losses to the Cavaliers, including the ACC Championship Final which ended 5-0.

"It's a huge opportunity for us," said senior Tristan Heinrich.

"Virginia has a really great team, but we're going to try and get that win."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu

Unexpected success highlighted UNC year

Pringle, Larkins led Tar Heels

BY SAMANTHA NEWMAN
SENIOR WRITER

This was the year the North Carolina women's basketball team was supposed to fall backward.

After graduating Camille Little and standout Ivory Latta — last year's top two scorers — there were doubts about the 2007-08 squad's potential.

UNC suffered another blow when senior point guard Alex Miller suffered a season-ending knee injury November 16.

It sounded like the makings of a rebuilding year.

Instead, the Tar Heels made program history.

They swept the conference, going undefeated in the ACC for the first time ever, and they added a fourth consecutive conference tournament title.

"People thought we were going to drop back, step down," coach Sylvia Hatchell said in a news conference Sunday.

"And in some ways we're a bet-



DTH FILE/EMMA PATTI

North Carolina senior Erlana Larkins was a central figure on a UNC squad that defied expectations this year by earning a No. 1 seed in the NCAAs.

ter team this year than we were last year."

There's no question UNC's season ended in a letdown, again without a national championship. The tears in Erlana Larkins' eyes following her team's loss Monday to Louisiana State in the Elite Eight showed her disappointment.

But during a season when the Tar Heels easily could have taken a step back, two new senior leaders took the reins.

Larkins and LaToya Pringle increased their individual contributions and fueled the team's success, leading UNC back to a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Pringle's point total average jumped from 9.7 last year to 14.6 with this year's squad.

And while the two seniors solidified the Tar Heels' core, their supporting cast played essential parts in the historic season.

Rashanda McCants took the momentum from the end of her sophomore campaign to become a scoring threat from every spot on the court.

"We needed more scoring on the perimeter and some more dribble penetration and all, and Rashanda has really stepped up and done much more of that," Hatchell said.

"Overall her skills have gotten

better, but her confidence is the biggest thing."

McCants got help on the perimeter from freshman Cetera DeGraffenreid. The point guard had the challenge of taking over the position after Miller's injury, and the transition was nearly seamless.

"I don't know if another freshman has done more for a team than what (DeGraffenreid) has done," Hatchell said.

The Tar Heels also got the production they needed off the bench. Jessica Breland was named the ACC's Sixth Player of the Year, with 10.6 points per game.

Not only did she average double figures, but her baskets always seemed to come when UNC needed a spark.

"I really enjoy coming off the bench," Breland said. "I really look up to Erlana and Toya. I just try to do everything that they're not doing on the court."

Next year she'll likely be leading the team down low on her own.

Again, UNC will graduate two of its top players. But if this year is any indication, new Tar Heels will step up to fill the spots and keep UNC a national contender.

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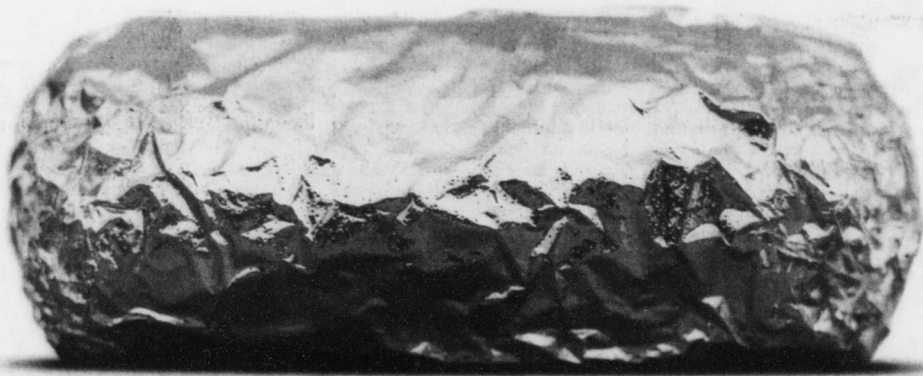
National Farmworker Awareness Week Film Screening

Got Food? Thank a Farmworker

Thursday, April 3rd - 7:00 p.m.
Student Union Auditorium

Film: *De Nadie* "There's no documentary films like this in Latin America, and it's very hard to find something more impressive than this one"

Speaker: **Lupe Huitron** Former migrant farmworker and future UNC-CH graduate student.



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