

# Hansbrough won't disappoint in NBA

Tyler Hansbrough will succeed in the NBA — whenever he decides to go. Yep, kitten's out of the back-pack.

The majority of basketball fans regard that notion as brazenly foolish and give it little credence — even after he won The Sporting News' Player of the Year Award.

Now, "success" for Hansbrough means a career as a consistent starter who might make an All-Star team or two.

First, let's discuss why many people expect Hansbrough to fail in the pros: People doubt his ability to play in the post against taller opponents. "Standing a generous 6 feet 9 inches," they ask, "how can Hansbrough handle power forwards and centers who stand about 7 feet tall?"

But more than his size, haters diss his skill. They assert the Psycho T-style of play that works for him in college will not fly in the pros. "You can't just bowl over NBA defenders like an 18-wheeler."

For starters, Hansbrough won't play center in the pros, but realistically he can flourish at the next level as a power forward. Sure, he'll struggle against the Kevin Garnetts and Amare Stoudemires of the league — but so does everyone else.

Contrary to Hansbrough's haters' beliefs, he isn't too small to play the four. Right now in the NBA, forwards such as the Hornets' David West and the Rockets' Carl Landry serve as examples of "vertically challenged" forwards playing good ball.

Hansbrough might not see eye-to-eye with many NBA power forwards, but he matches them in the weight room and surpasses them in tenacity on the court. Rebounding amounts to positioning, instinct and heart, and Hansbrough exemplifies those traits — and an NBA-ready physique — in spades.

Now which team Hansbrough plays for will matter greatly. He needs to play for a team with good height in the post and would fit excellently in a running system such as the Phoenix Suns.

As for skills, many people overlook Hansbrough's talent because he looks funny on the court. Don't underestimate the level of dif-



**SAM ROSENTHAL**  
GARDEN STATE OF MIND

ficulty of the shots he makes in the paint — Hansbrough gets the ball to the rim from ridiculous angles, often after being mauled by multiple defenders. That takes incredible body control and spatial awareness, two qualities no player learns from a coach.

See, Hansbrough scores in bushels in college while opponents cover him with two or three of their players at a time, but the pro game involves much more one-on-one play and a less congested court because of the deeper three-point-line. Even for NBA players, defending Hansbrough mano a mano presents a major challenge.

However, the most important skill in Hansbrough's arsenal just started blossoming: his outside jump shot. You saw it last week against Louisville, as you have more and more this season. His teammates say Hansbrough's jumper regularly goes down in practice, and he simply needs to become more comfortable knocking it down in game situations.

If he continues to improve his shooting, Hansbrough will stretch NBA defenses as a versatile power forward who will hit the 15-to-20-footer every time you leave it open.

And here comes the kicker, the primary reason why No. 50 will make it in the NBA: Whatever Tyler Hansbrough must do to succeed, he will be hellbent on doing it. If he needs to make the NBA three-pointer, you bet your bum he'll start launching bombs until they drop in with regularity.

He might take some lumps for a couple years, but rest assured, Psycho T will work and work and work until his game gets to where it needs to be — and he possesses the talent to take it there.

Just you wait and see.

Contact the Sports Editor at [sports@unc.edu](mailto:sports@unc.edu).

# Gridiron Heels to be showcased

Football spring game Saturday

BY POWELL LATIMER  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Butch Davis is so excited, he's almost bouncing around Kenan Stadium.

The North Carolina football coach was nothing but smiles Wednesday while talking about Saturday's spring showcase, a day of activities starting at 10 a.m. at Kenan Stadium and culminating in a public, intra-squad scrimmage at 1 p.m.

Part of his excitement could stem from the fact that the UNC football team is on the field again, but it could also be because of what happened in preseason practices thus far.

"Defense dominated," Davis said. "They are playing very fast; they are playing very physical. They are out-executing at this stage right now the offense."

That's good news for Davis, a former defensive line coach for the Dallas Cowboys who last season coached a Tar Heel defense that ranked No. 9 in the ACC in rushing defense.

With defensive stalwarts Hilee Taylor and Kentwan Balmer preparing for the NFL Draft, Davis will rely on a somewhat thinned stable of young defensive linemen to create the kind of pressure he wants.

"I would love, I mean I would truly love, to have at least 10 guys — five tackles and five ends. ... And keep guys fresh to where every single possession that the other team has the ball, we know that we have four guys in there that can just really pin their ears back and go play," Davis said. "Right now we have only about six or seven."

Davis and the coaching staff have added more depth to what, by the season's end, ranked as the ACC's second-best pass defense in terms of yards per game. Former running backs Richie Rich and Johnny White have both moved to cornerback, where they are stacking up against UNC's arsenal of receivers.

Those receivers are training this spring without last year's starting quarterback, T.J. Yates, who is missing spring practices. The duel

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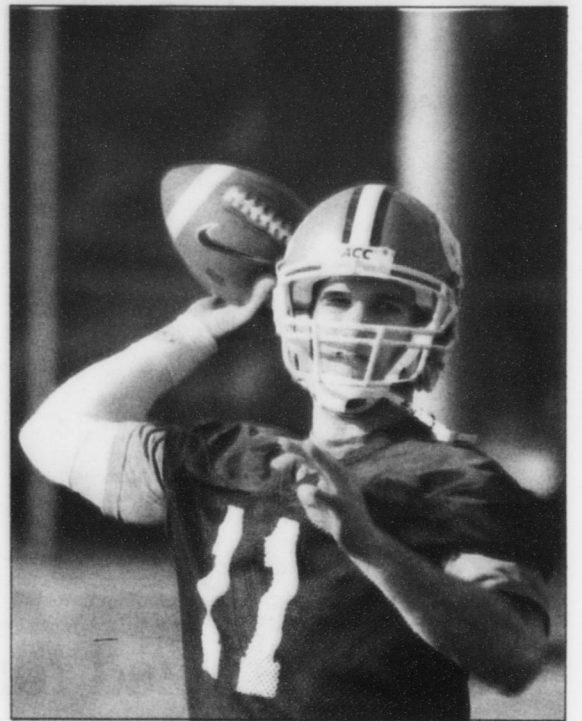
BUTCH DAVIS, ON THE DEFENSE

— at least for now — is between 2006 starter Cam Sexton and red-shirt freshman Mike Paulus. So far, Sexton has impressed teammates.

"I think Cam has more experience than Mike, and I think that's helped Cam," running back Greg Little said. "Cam's been making some excellent throws, and he really surprised me because I didn't get to see him much last year because of T.J."

In its essence, however, spring season gives coaches a chance to look at UNC's reserves in order to see who deserves some more time on the field in the fall.

"We want to get a great evaluation of those guys to see how much they've grown, how much they've developed and to give them more playing time," Davis said.



DTH FILE/SAM WARD

North Carolina quarterback Cam Sexton readies to throw the ball in March during the first practice of the Tar Heels' spring football session.

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