

UNC boasts winners across the board

BY MIKE EHRLICH
SENIOR WRITER

Legendary North Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith, in a 1997 interview with Football News, said UNC is not a basketball school.

"This is a women's soccer school," he said. "We're just trying to keep up with them."

Smith was right and wrong in his assessment of sports at the nation's first public university.

This is, in fact, a women's soccer school. The 19 national championships in the program's first 28 years attest to that. But a year after the last of those titles, the 2007 squad was bounced from the NCAA Tournament in the third round, which is tied for the worst finish ever by a Tar Heel squad.

Returning stars Yael Averbuch, Tobin Heath and Casey Nogueira will be joined by eight incoming

freshmen and a transfer this year to try to bounce back from the abrupt end to last year's season.

This is also a field hockey school. The 2007 field hockey team tore through its schedule en route to a perfect 24-0 season and a national championship. The Tar Heels will look to defend the title this year without National Player of the Year Rachel Dawson.

Increasingly, UNC is returning to the days when this was a football school, too. The program took a major step by hiring head coach Butch Davis, who led the Tar Heels to a 4-8 record last season.

But with the emergence in the season's final two games of Greg Little (243 rushing yards) and a year with Davis under their belts, the Tar Heels have hopes of improvement for this year.

And Chapel Hill is impatiently

craving such improvement, as Davis was given a \$291,000 annual raise following a season in which UNC's win total increased by just one game from the year before.

This is also a baseball school. UNC was the national runner-up each of the last two years in the College World Series, and the No. 2 Tar Heels look Omaha-bound again.

This is also a lacrosse school. And a tennis school. Both the men's and women's teams in each of those sports are consistently ranked at the national level. There are individual national champions running track and wrestling, and there are All-ACC performers playing men's soccer and women's volleyball.

And yes, this is a men's basketball school. Nothing brings the community together like the Smith Center.

April's trip to the Final Four ended two wins earlier than Tar

Heel fans desired. But with sports-writers and pundits across the nation already ranking UNC near the top of next year's pack, a return trip is conceivable.

And more help is on the way. North Carolina boasts a strong recruiting class that features the nation's top two power forward prospects, 6-foot-11-inch Tyler Zeller and 6-foot-8-inch Ed Davis. Joining them in Chapel Hill will be a third McDonalds All-American, No. 3 point guard prospect Larry Drew.

These three raw freshmen will join an experienced squad that has suffered tough losses in the last two years in the Elite Eight and the Final Four.

So the Dean was right — this is a women's soccer school. But there is plenty more to see both on and off Fetzter Field in one of the nation's best athletic programs.



DTH FILE/LARRY BAUM

Yael Averbuch, a midfielder on the women's soccer team, also is on the U.S. National Team and has become a presence in the NCAA.



SAM ROSENTHAL
A GARDEN STATE OF MIND

Freshy's guide to UNC sports

So. Welcome to Chapel Hill, y'all.

As freshmen, you're in dire need of a guide to sports at North Carolina. Hopefully this will avoid those awkward moments of upperclassmen mocking your ignorance of UNC's ways: You've never even rushed Franklin Street, Mr. Freshypants.

Were you born in the '90s?

I bet you couldn't get Alex Stepheson's name right if you tried — HA! You said "Stevenson," you moron.

Out of pity to all of the teary-eyed freshmen who will approach total strangers this fall, asking how to get to that place called the Smith Center, here is the Chapel Hill Sports Handbook, Abridged Version, for the class of 2012.

Frosh, you might have heard that this is a basketball school. Lies! Sure, North Carolina has won five national championships, but that's 14 trophies shy of the number the women's soccer team's got. Luckily, the lady footballers stop playing long before March and don't detract from basketball's already meager fan base.

Honestly, though, you should know your hoops at this school.

Start with some basic math: 23 = MJ; 3 digits = Bojangles' biscuits; and 1994 = Charlotte Smith buzzer-beater. Gerald Henderson is the most popular guy in the Triangle.

Teachers cannot schedule exams the morning after any UNC vs. Duke or March Madness game — it's an unwritten law.

Maybe some of our unusual ways spark your curiosity. For instance:

Why is the Tar Heels' mascot a Ram?

Agents on both sides have tried keeping this hush-hush, but it seems that Kellogg's wanted two first-round draft picks in exchange for Tony the Tiger, and the Kool-Aid man waived his no-trade clause because he loves his reddish skin tone.

Why does Kenan Stadium seem much fuller during the 2nd and 3rd quarters?

When you actually make it to a whole football game (probably about your fourth or fifth earnest attempt), you'll understand: watching the game on TV fits your social calendar much better.

Why do people love Roy Williams so much?

Because he isn't Matt Doherty.

Why is there nowhere to tailgate?

Because life isn't fair, freshman.

On a serious note, football, baseball, soccer and all of the other non-basketball sports are well worth following and don't make you live and die — in our case, mostly the latter — by the lottery.

If someone ever says, "Hey, let's go to the women's lacrosse game tonight," try going instead of making fun of them.

Head over to Cary one weekend to see the baseball team — in case you hadn't heard, they made it to the Men's College World Series Finals in 2006 and 2007. As of right now they look poised to make it a three-peat.

And if you want a real treat, check out volleyball.

Stop laughing — if you listen to one thing in this column, make it the bit about volleyball.

And more than anything, class of 2012, remember this: When you see athletes dining at Lenoir Hall, it is completely polite, even encouraged, for you to approach them and shout to your friend across the room, "Yo, Jackie, come meet Hak — how do you say it? — Hakeem Nicks." He plays football. Of course he doesn't mind taking a picture with you. Just remember to tag him on Facebook."

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