

BY MIKE EHRLICH
SENIOR WRITER

Brandon Tate knew that the next time the ball touched his hands, he was going to score. He'd already returned the opening kickoff for 56 yards and a punt for 38 more. But just before his third return attempt of the day, he had a message for his teammates.

"On the first punt return, I almost ran that one back," Tate said after the game. "So I told my teammates on the second one, 'Y'all just do your job, and I'm going to run it back.' And that's what happened."

Indeed. The explosive senior fielded the punt and broke decisively through the first wave of would-be tacklers. He cut right, then left, then back right. And then he was gone.

Eighty-two yards later, he'd set a new personal record for longest punt return and put North Carolina in the lead, 7-0.

It wasn't the last record he'd set or the last points he'd score on a night that will

TATE THE GREAT

go down as one of the best individual performances in UNC and ACC history.

Tate finished the game with 397 all-purpose yards — a new school record and the second-most ever in the ACC — and scored two touchdowns to provide the Tar Heels with a desperately needed spark.

"Coach said he's never seen anybody play like that, and I don't think I've ever seen anybody play like that," sophomore tailback Shaun Draughn said. "Tate, he showed up, man — he definitely showed up."

Tate got it done in every phase of the game. He rushed for 106 yards, becoming the only UNC receiver ever to rush for more than 100 yards (he had 151 career rushing yards heading into the game). And in the process, Tate tallied more rushing yards than the rest of the team's running backs combined.

He notched 93 receiving yards, including a 57-yard touchdown grab. Tate also amassed 198 yards on returns, which ranks second in the UNC record books — behind his own 2006 total of 208 yards in a game against Duke.

But second-best wasn't even good enough for Tate this weekend, at least when it came to personal records.

Tate grabbed his career-long reception with the 57-yarder. His career-best punt return came with his prophesied score in the first quarter.

And en route to his 100-plus rush yards, Tate matched his career-long run with 54 yards.

But most impressive was the efficiency with which those numbers piled up. His 397 all-purpose yards came on just 11 chances, an average of 36.1 yards per touch.

"He's a huge-time player; he's an explosive player," tailback Greg Little said. "He can do that every time he touches the ball, and I felt like he made the most of every opportunity he had."

Tate also was timely with his theatrics. On a night when the UNC offense couldn't sustain a drive and the defense was left on the field for long periods of time, No. 87 was the difference.

When Mother Nature stormed for nearly two hours and McNeese State stormed back with 20 straight points, it was the lightning-quick Tate breaking away from the secondary for a 57-yard score that gave the Tar Heels a lead they would never relinquish.

And when the offense stalled, it was Tate with a 54-yard run and a leaping 23-yard catch to set up UNC scores.

"They played better than us in a lot of phases," coach Butch Davis said. "Fortunately for us, the only phase that they didn't play as well in is with Brandon Tate."

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ATHLETICS IN-DEPTH

Tough games offer perks

Schools seek TV spots, exposure

BY GABE HIATT
SENIOR WRITER

You don't need a degree from Kenan-Flagler Business School to know that it takes money to make money.

So perhaps critics of coach Butch Davis's offseason \$291,000 raise should take notice of his impact in the ticket office.

"This year we've sold over 36,000 season tickets, which is the most in the history of the program," Associate Athletic Director Clint Gwaltney said. "I think that speaks for itself."

Increased ticket sales reflect money coming into the program and justify a tougher schedule — both this year and down the line.

The more nationally televised attention the school receives, the more recruits and storied programs want to visit Chapel Hill.

"We'd like to be in a position to where we are playing some of those afternoon and evening games and have that national exposure," Athletic Director Dick Baddour said.

Landings those games necessitates compiling a strong schedule — such as North Carolina's slate this year, with ACC competition augmented by traditional powers and up-and-comers from around the country.

The Tar Heels travel to New Jersey to face Rutgers for a Thursday night game Sept. 11 in a live broadcast courtesy of The Worldwide Leader in Sports.

In back-to-back weeks in October UNC hosts Connecticut and then Notre Dame, along with the Irish's fat national NBC contract.

"We see it from the marketing side, from the ticketing side and from the operations side,"

Tar Heels take season opener — barely

BY POWELL LATIMER
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

A storybook beginning, it wasn't. North Carolina did defeat Football Championship Subdivision opponent McNeese State 35-27 Saturday night, but that's about all the Tar Heels managed to do.

"We really have to play better," coach Butch Davis said. "We didn't accomplish very much offensively; our defense tonight, we didn't establish anything."

FOOTBALL
McNeese St. 27
UNC 35

ONLINE

Check out a slideshow of UNC's first game against McNeese State.

One thing that did get established was Brandon Tate's name atop the UNC record books. Tate's scintillating performance racked up 397 all-purpose yards — more than the total offense generated by both UNC and McNeese State.

"Give credit to Brandon Tate," cornerback Kendrick Burney said. "Because they say 'no I in team,' but there's definitely a Brandon Tate there."

UNC opened the game by scoring 14 unanswered points and appeared to be cruising to an easy victory.

But with 12:03 left in the second quarter, heavy rains and lightning forced a nearly two-hour delay.

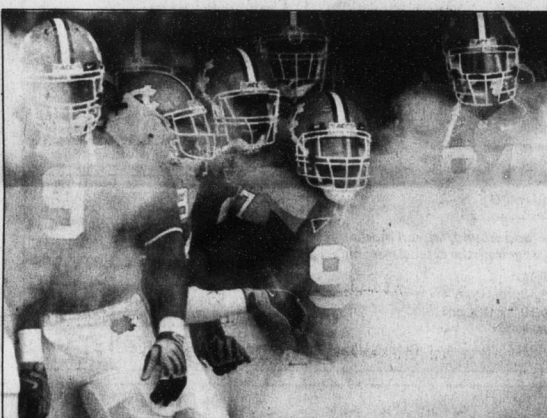
"We told them to go back to their locker, sit down, put their iPods on, cut out all the noise, all the walking around, get out of the hyper mode," Davis said.

Apparently, UNC struggled to get back into hyper mode, allowing McNeese State to reel off 20 straight points and take the lead with 5:35 remaining in the third quarter.

"The biggest thing is we were flat; we didn't come back as hyped as we were," Burney said. "They did what they needed to do, and we just didn't play as well as we needed to."

"You can't blame it on the rain delay, whether it's a two-hour rain delay or a five-minute rain delay," Burney and the UNC defense had their hands full as McNeese State brought their own speedsters

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North Carolina players get psyched up in the entrance tunnel before their season opener against McNeese State on Saturday at Kenan Stadium.

MEN'S SOCCER

UNC opens 2008 with two victories

FIU, VCU fall in weekend action

BY CHRIS HEMPSON
STAFF WRITER

Maybe it was the weather-delayed start.

Maybe it was the white jersey tops instead of the usual Carolina blue.

Maybe it was the lack of a band and a raucous student section.

Because whatever the North Carolina men's soccer team had in its 3-0 victory against Florida

MEN'S SOCCER

UNC 3

FIU 0

UNC 1

VCU 0

OVERTIME

ONLINE

Read more about UNC's wins in this weekend's games.

went straight to an attacking style that was absent for much of 2007.

The ball seemed to dart across and around the pitch, with the Tar Heel midfield constantly switching the field to build the attack from the wings, creating chances in abundance.

"We wanted to come out with a punch Friday night," senior mid-



Senior Garry Lewis led the Tar Heel midfield in two victories this weekend at Fetzer Field.

fielder Garry Lewis said. "We wanted to attack and bring it to them. It was about being direct and pressing. The best way to do that is by constantly attacking."

Junior Eddie Ababio and sophomore Cameron Brown did just that.

Their on-the-ball skills were precise and glamorous, with each of them cleverly using behind-the-back flicks, shoulder feints and quickness to win individual battles.

The night left the Golden Panthers (0-2) in disarray and the Tar Heel faithful in the stands.

Minutes after Ababio scored the final goal with 8:08 left in the second half, he led a long procession of Tar Heels in a gleeful sprint toward and into the stands.

It looked like Sunday was going to be a breeze after such a performance.

Wrong. On a water-logged Fetzer Field, the Tar Heels came out flat-footed, sloppy and indecisive.

Coach Elmar Bolowich's new offense was nowhere to be found.

Passes were played behind or

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FIELD HOCKEY

Opening weekend starts smooth, ends badly for North Carolina

Tar Heels even at 1-1 for season

BY ANNA KIM
STAFF WRITER

WINSTON-SALEM — All good things must come to an end.

But in addressing the North Carolina field hockey team's first loss since 2006, head coach Karen Shelton said she implored her team to do one thing — hate it.

"I hope you're angry about this," Shelton said. "We're not as good as we think we are, and we lost it on defense."

FIELD HOCKEY

Michigan 0

UNC 6

Iowa 3

UNC 2

INSIDE

UNC coach and players took their first 2008 loss hard.

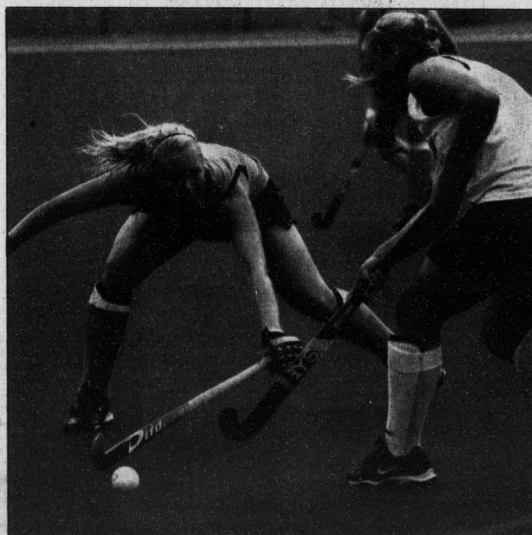
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fresh off a career-best four goals against No. 9 Michigan, one short of UNC's single-game scoring record.

At the 9:15 mark of Sunday's loss, Forword barreled through defenders to hurl the ball into the back of the net with her signature reverse stick shot.

With the Tar Heels leading at halftime, Forword again ran across to the goal, setting up the same shot.

Forword's shot execution was matched only by the save of Iowa goalkeeper Lissa Munley, whose glove was perfectly placed for the deflection.



Junior UNC forward Danielle Forword reaches out to corral a loose ball during UNC's 3-2 loss to No. 5 Iowa on Sunday in Winston-Salem.

"If only she didn't save it," Forword said of the shot. "I think I'm lucky because it's hard for defenders to defend it. If they are coming in, they're gonna get their faces chopped off if they don't connect."

North Carolina's offense was bolstered by other members of the attacking battalion, and UNC extended its lead with another goal about 12 minutes into the second half.

A penalty corner taken by Melanie Brill was rebounded by Kiki Norbruis and passed to Ilse

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THIS WEEK

FRIDAY

MEN'S SOCCER
vs. South Carolina
TIME: 5 p.m.
LOCATION: Winston-Salem

WOMEN'S SOCCER
vs. Notre Dame
TIME: 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Fetzer Field

FIELD HOCKEY
at Wake Forest
TIME: 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Winston-Salem

VOLLEYBALL
vs. Missouri State
TIME: 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Smith Center

SATURDAY

VOLLEYBALL
vs. Georgetown, Davidson
TIME: noon, 7 p.m.
LOCATION: Smith Center

CROSS COUNTRY
at Campbell Invitational
TIME: 9 a.m.
LOCATION: Buies Creek

SUNDAY

FIELD HOCKEY
vs. Georgetown
TIME: 1 p.m.
LOCATION: Henry Stadium

WOMEN'S SOCCER
vs. Kentucky
TIME: 3 p.m.
LOCATION: Fetzer Field