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DELAY OF GAME

The times, they are a' changin'

What is this feeling sweeping around campus? North Carolina never was a football school. And it still isn't — yet.

Sure, the football team was good under Mack Brown back in the day, and Julius Peppers is still piling up the sacks for the Panthers. But you'd be hard-pressed to say that at any point those teams were more important to the campus than the Tar Heels of the hardwood.

Ask Joakim Noah and his Florida Gators teammates. Twice they beat every team put in front of them in the NCAA Tournament but couldn't upstage the football team on their own campus.

Looking for a more relevant example? Try Roy Williams' ex-employers. Kansas has a football squad ranked No. 16 in the AP Top 25, but they are still No. 2 in Jayhawk fans' hearts.

But here's the only fact that keeps me from proclaiming North Carolina a basketball school for eternity: In recent memory, the football Tar Heels have not been this good.

That includes when they only lost one game all season in 1997 and finished ranked No. 6 in the country. Their lone win over a ranked team in the final AP poll was a 16-13 win over

**LOUIE HORVATH**
THE CHAMP IS HERE

Georgia Tech.

The other ranked team they played? Florida State, who trounced them 20-3.

The Gator Bowl that year was also the first game coached by Carl Torbush.

Nothing against him, but I'd rather have Mack Brown.

Then there was John Bunting. (Contemplating a rant.

Contemplating.

Nah, what's done is done. I guess I'll leave it in the past.)

Fast-forward to today.

This team, led by a nucleus of sophomores and Brandon Tate, is just one uncharacteristic quarter against Virginia Tech from being the ACC Coastal leaders.

Think about last week's amazing wave at Kenan. That in itself shows how far the football program has come.

Being part of a 60,000-person wave, spawned from absolute boredom, was special for all involved.

It seemed as if no one left their seats. A longer lightning delay against McNeese State earlier this season thinned out the entire stands as people fled the stadium and didn't bother to come back.

Now, on national television, with the team about to score a big win over a then-Top 25 team in Connecticut, no one could be bothered with a little lighting malfunction.

That showed how important being there for the game was for those in the stands.

As an assistant SportSaturday editor, I almost feel cheated from the whole "making a SportSaturday for a game that is pretty inconsequential for everyone involved" experience of years past.

Almost.

We are now fully entrenched in a bright new age of Tar Heels football.

My words of wisdom for Butch if he wants to usurp (or at least discreetly steal a little bit of sway from) Roy: Keep it up, because everyone loves a winner.

Contact Louie Horvath
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Ron Stutts and the WCHL Championship Sports Crew

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During the Week...

Monday

7:00 AM Monday Press Conference with Coach Davis

Tuesday

7:00 PM Butch Davis LIVE

Thursday

7:00 PM The official kickoff with Jeff Hamlin

Pre-Game

12:30 PM Countdown to Kick Off with Ron Stutts
1:30 PM Off the Top Sports, Live from Top of the Hill
2:30 PM Tar Heel Sports Network Pre-Game

Post-Game

6:30 PM Tar Heel Sports Network Post-Game Show
7:30 PM Ham's Postgame Party

THE MOST COMPLETE COVERAGE OF UNC FOOTBALL ON THE AIR!