

LUCKY BREAKS

WIN PROPELS TAR HEELS TO NO. 18 IN AP POLL

BY DAVID ELY
SENIOR WRITER

North Carolina thought it had secured a last-second win.

The then-No. 22 Tar Heels stormed the field in celebration after Notre Dame quarterback Jimmy Clausen's spike attempt came as the clock expired.

But just as the UNC coaching staff readied to congratulate the Fighting Irish, the referee intervened and said the previous play was under review.

For several minutes, the Tar Heels waited to see whether ND sophomore receiver Michael Floyd had fumbled the ball inside the North Carolina 10-yard line.

FOOTBALL

The officials ruled the play a turnover — Notre Dame's fifth of the game — and UNC took over, taking a knee to secure a 29-24 come-from-behind win Saturday at Kenan Stadium.

"It was the worst," junior receiver Hakeem Nicks said of the last-second delay. "Everybody was just basically biting fingernails hoping that it went our way."

The Floyd fumble was just one moment in a series of big plays and momentum shifts throughout the afternoon.

From the get-go, the Fighting Irish came out firing. On its first series, Notre Dame (4-2) opened with five-receiver sets and picked apart the UNC secondary en route to a quick touchdown.

The Irish's offensive efficiency didn't end with that drive. Notre Dame scored on three of its four first-half drives as Clausen dictated the game's pace with a combination of deft strikes to receivers and designed draws.

"We got it put to us early, especially in the first quarter," coach Butch Davis said. "It's a credit to their coaching staff to try and change the tempo and change the pace of the ball game — they had us reeling."

To its credit, North Carolina (5-1) remained composed throughout the onslaught. Quarterback Cameron Sexton methodically drove the Tar Heels for three first-half field goals to keep UNC within striking distance.

Sexton repeatedly connected with Nicks, who became the prominent target in the passing game once Brandon Tate exited with a sprained right knee in the first half.

Nicks caught seven passes for 116 yards in the first half, with many of those receptions resulting in first downs.

But at the rate Notre Dame was going, the field goals Sexton and Nicks created wouldn't be enough for North Carolina to rally.

Trailing 17-9 at the half, Davis told his team in the locker room that they needed a big play — something to swing the momentum back to the UNC sideline.

And on a day dominated by offense, the game swung on a play by the defense.

On the first snap of the second half, linebacker Quan Sturdivant picked off a Clausen pass and rumbled 32 yards for a touchdown.

"We talked about it in the locker room. We need something good to happen," Davis said. "It just electrified the whole football team. It kinda got our mojo going again."

With that, the North Carolina defense gained an edge on Notre Dame, and the Tar Heel offense turned those field goal opportunities into touchdowns.

Ryan Houston scored from one yard out with 5:14 left in the third, and Sexton leapt across the goal line on the first play of the fourth quarter. That touchdown gave the Tar Heels a 29-24 advantage — their first and only lead of the game.

The offense was not the only unit that raised its play after halftime. The Fighting Irish still drove the ball at will — ND finished the game with 472 total yards — but when the game was on the line, the Tar Heels' defense didn't break.

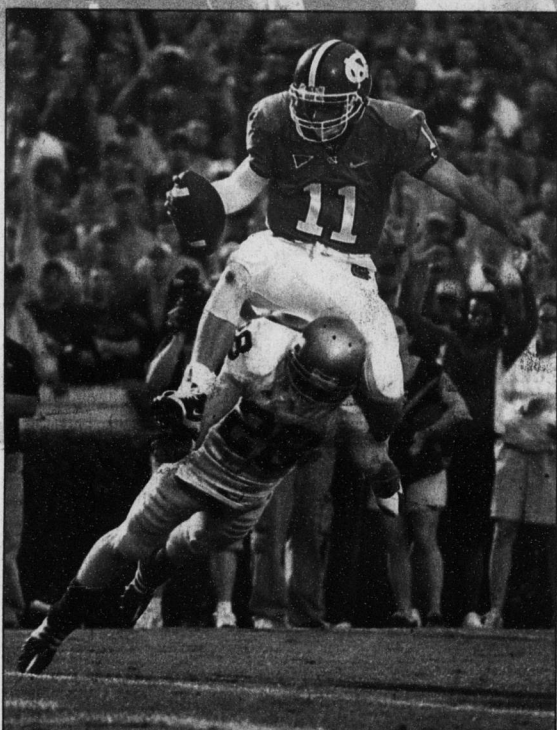
Notre Dame's last four drives ended in turnovers, the final three coming in UNC territory.

With both offenses playing at a high level, North Carolina's plus-five advantage in takeaways was the key in the comeback — the Tar Heels' second rally since their Sept. 20 meltdown against Virginia Tech.

"We enjoy coming back and winning, and we know how to do it," Sexton said.

"If that's the way it's gonna be, I think we're good at it."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.



ABOVE LEFT DTH/ANTHONY HARRIS; ABOVE DTH/DAVID ENARSON
Cameron Sexton again had little to do but manage the offense in UNC's win against the Irish, but he did manage a leaping TD in the second half.

North Carolina defense steps up big — again

BY POWELL LATIMER
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Jimmy Clausen had no chance. On first and 10 from the North Carolina 46, Notre Dame's quarterback couldn't even look downfield before defensive tackle Aleric Mullins was in his face.

Clausen cocked his arm to fire, but Mullins bulled his way to the ball. Two seconds later, the ball was underneath big No. 97 for a turnover.

Mullins' sack and fumble recovery was one of several early blows from North Carolina's second-half defense — not to be confused with the unit that took the field in the first half.

That group got burned by Clausen's arm and Notre Dame's

DTH ONLINE: Check out a photo slideshow of Saturday's game at dailytarheel.com

five-wideout set to the tune of 199 passing yards in the opening two quarters.

So UNC changed things up. Butch Davis decided that he'd had enough of Notre Dame coach Charlie Weis' offensive gimmicks and threw in some wrinkles of his own.

North Carolina brought in Da'Norris Searcy as a third safety, a package that Davis said his team hadn't even practiced.

"We just kind of scratched it in the dirt and said, 'You're going in, and you're going to play this position.'"

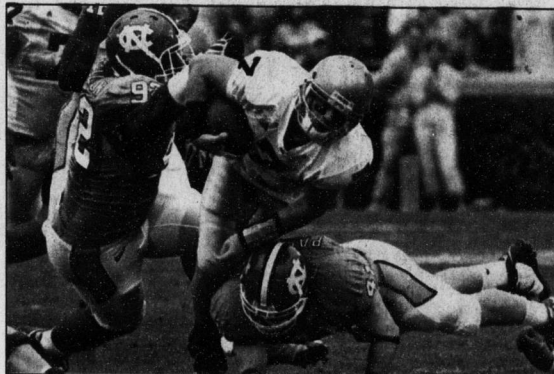
Improvisational as the scheme was, the package paid immedi-

ate dividends. Just 12 seconds into the second half, Quan Sturdivant snatched an interception and took it to the house, setting the stage for UNC's frantic late-game comeback.

"The key was that we played much better coverage," Davis said. "There was not the immediate quick throws. The quarterback had to hold the ball, he had to scramble a little bit, he had to throw it into coverage."

The UNC defense frustrated Clausen for most of the second half. Many of his throws were into coverage and on the run, and the extra defensive backs allowed North Carolina to break up three passes and intercept two others in the games' final two periods.

SEE DEFENSE, PAGE 9



DTH/DAVID ENARSON
UNC's E.J. Wilson (92) and Mark Paschal (41) work on a takedown of Notre Dame QB Jimmy Clausen, who was sacked four times on the day.

Tar Heels notch shutout No. 8

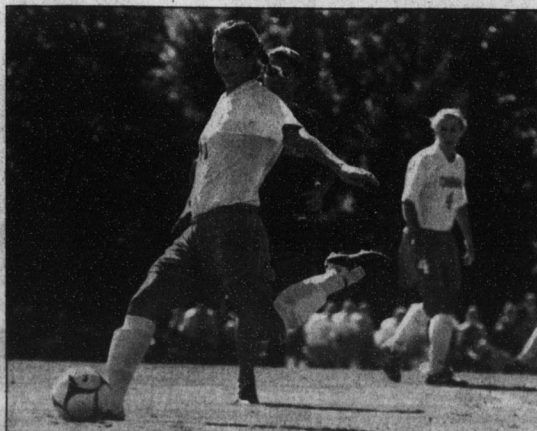
BY LOUIE HORVATH
SENIOR WRITER

For most of the first half, it seemed as though the No. 2 North Carolina women's soccer team was shooting at a goal with a lid on it.

Fortunately for the Tar Heels, the Virginia Tech defense broke the lid with an own goal for UNC's first score, and things got worse from there for the UNC 4 Hokies.

The scorecard originally credited the goal to Ali Hawkins, but when she admitted postgame that she never touched the ball, the scorers gave it to Yael Averbuch with a Virginia Tech deflection.

SEE SOCCER, PAGE 9



DTH/ZACH GUTTERMAN
Senior midfielder Yael Averbuch recorded two goals and one assist against Virginia Tech, bringing her total to five scores on the season.

MEN'S SOCCER Shriver leads Tar Heels to victory in Durham

BY RACHEL ULLRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

DURHAM — As the teams made their way back onto the field during Friday's North Carolina-Duke soccer game, AC/DC's "Hell's Bells"

UNC 2
Duke 0

blasted out of the loudspeakers. "Oh, man," the North Carolina sports information director said in the press box. "That's just going to get the Tar Heels fired up."

He was right. It started with midfielder Garry Lewis air-guitaring on midfield waiting for play to start.

Then the Tar Heels managed to

double their lead and barely let the Blue Devils cross midfield in the half's first 30 minutes.

By the end of it, UNC had a 2-0 win against Duke and an improved conference record to boot.

"It's a huge step forward," senior striker Brian Shriver said. "This is the first game I feel like we've played a complete 90 minutes and put it together for the entire time."

And coming off a tough 1-0 loss to Virginia last week, the No. 16 Tar Heels (9-2-1, 2-2 ACC) needed a boost — especially in its conference record, now back at .500.

"More or less for us to bounce

SEE SHRIVER, PAGE 9

ONLINE SPORTS

The women's soccer team has been bolstered by countless attacking options. Go online for the story.

The men's soccer team's 4-5-1 might not be the normal formation, but it worked Friday. Go online for the story.

Check up on the rowing, men's tennis and women's golf teams' play this weekend. Go online for the briefs.

ACC SCORES

NO. 21 WAKE FOREST 12, CLEMSON 7

Riley Skinner hit D.J. Boldin on a 12-yard touchdown pass that proved to be the difference with 5:28 remaining in the fourth quarter.

VIRGINIA 35, EAST CAROLINA 20

Cedric Peerman ran for 173 yards and two long touchdowns, and Virginia turned back a second-half East Carolina rally.

GEORGIA TECH 10, GARDNER-WEBB 7

Derrick Morgan tipped a 43-yard field goal attempt by Gardner-Webb's Ryan Gates with three seconds left, helping GT squeak out an unexpectedly difficult victory.

MIAMI 20, UCF 14

Graig Cooper had a career-high 23 rushes for 90 yards, including the clinching touchdown after a muffed punt return late in the fourth quarter and Miami snapped a two-game losing streak.

OPEN DATES

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