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The Daily Tar Heel

Tar Heels on the mend for open week

Yates, Pianalto's status decided today

BY RACHEL ULLRICH SPORTS EDITOR

Butch Davis added another name to the North Carolina football team's ever-growing injury list

this week — his own. "Well, the head coach is on inju-ry reserve this week. I've got clicker thumb," Davis said by means of introduction.

"I'm getting some treatment, but it's from channel surfing all around on Saturday. It's a rare opportunity for us to get a chance to watch a lot of football games."

Davis might be ailing (though he "didn't bring his splint" to the press conference), but the bye eek provided many of his players the opportunity to rest up and get healthier — both physically and mentally — after Oct. 25's demanding Boston College rally.

'Oh, yeah," senior safety Trimane

Goddard said.

"People are nicked up; we can rest a little more during the bye week. You don't have to go through a lot of contact as you would in a game, so your body can heal up and rest."

But Goddard said less contact didn't mean less practice. "We're going to practice to get

better. Nothing is going to platter to get because we're still trying to get bet-ter, even during a bye week." The Tar Heels picked a good week to rest. Coming up against a

strong Georgia Tech team currently leading the Coastal division, the team could be set to return several of its key players.

Quarterback T.J. Yates will have sat the minimum six weeks out-lined after his injury, but Davis said the staff will not know what his availability will be until after today's practice.

"He continued to take part in the individual drills, he took individual routes to the receivers, and, you know, he did some 7-on-7 things, Davis said.

"He split some time with Mike Paulus with the second team reps as far as 7-on-7 was concerned." But Yates' mobility still is lim-

ited, and he hasn't played any reps against a defensive rush.

Quarterback Cameron Sexton is 4-1 at the helm since Yates' injury, and he has led the team through the past five weeks with a legitimate chance at a conference title and four ACC games remaining.

"We all dream about winning championships and playing in big games, and we talked about it a lot." Sexton said.

'But we're in it now and we're sitting pretty well, at 6-2. ... So I think now we're really saying, 'Hey, we've got a shot, let's not go mess this up. Let's make sure we're focused on working hard."

With such high stakes on the next games, Davis said the Tar Heels have taken advantage of the rest the bye week gave them.

"I think the emotional, psycho-logical break was good for the foot-ball team," Davis said, noting that Sunday's brief practice was one of the team's best. "Guys were a little fresher, they

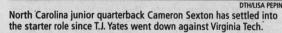
seemed a little bit quicker. And so I think it was good all around."

Davis said the status of tight end Zack Pianalto also will be decided today. Pianalto currently is out with a sprained ankle. But even as Yates and Pianalto

prepare for potential returns, thinks he might miss some time epare for potential returns, Davis

with his injury. "I'm probably doubtful for Monday Night Football tonight," he said. "I don't know if I can hold the clicker.'

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