

Vidnovic not a sure bet yet

by David Zucchino
Sports Editor

There he stood, sweating and grinning, and maybe even secretly pleased that half a dozen middle-aged sports reporters were competing for his attention.

Nick Vidnovic leaned back, his right leg braced against a bench in the Carolina dressing room, and tried as politely as possible to answer all the questions. Stark naked, without the loose blue uniform and the bulky shoulder pads, he looked shorter and lighter than the men who threw the questions at him.

The questions were all the same. Will you start next week? If not, then who will? Did you think you had it made after the two touchdowns? What about Klise and Kupec?

No, he didn't think he had it made. And no, he didn't know who would start at quarterback next Saturday. And what about Klise and Kupec — they're good quarterbacks, not his competition.

Vidnovic fingered a strawberry the size of an omelet on his right leg and sniffed several times to clear his sinuses from the pounding they had taken on the field. Last year Paul Miller answered all the

questions. This year it's Vidnovic for the opening game, at least.

That's the problem, Vidnovic, who didn't know for sure he was starting at quarterback until 15 minutes before game-time, came up with touchdowns the first two times the UNC offense got the ball. After that, though, some missed assignments kept Carolina off the scoreboard until just before the first half ended.

Vidnovic got the starting call after competing in a four-way battle for most of fall practice. One of the quarterbacks, sophomore Charles Baggett, was red-shirted last week but Bill Dooley still

has Vidnovic, Chris Kupec and Johnny Klise to choose from.

"Today's game didn't decide a thing," Vidnovic said between sips of coke. "It's gonna be a game-to-game thing really. If I can't get the job done, then Coach Dooley can fall back on Johnny, and if he can't do it we have Chris."

He paused, sniffed a couple of times and nervously rattled the ice in the coke cup.

"I think we're very fortunate to have three quarterbacks who are ready to go at any time without sacrificing anything," he continued.

All three quarterbacks saw action Saturday, but Dooley went with Vidnovic for most of the game. Vidnovic finished as the Tar Heel's second-leading ground gainer with 49 yards on 11 carries and completed four of nine passes for another 34 yards. He also punted five times for a 40.0 yard average.

Klise got results on his very first play from scrimmage. With only 1:20 left in the first half, and the ball on the Richmond five, he replaced Vidnovic. Taking the snap, he dropped back to pass, then tucked the ball under his arm and sprinted around right end for Carolina's third score.

Klise hit all three passes that he attempted and picked up 36 yards on six carries.

"Klise looked real good after he went in," Vidnovic conceded. "He certainly deserved a chance to show what he could do, especially after we started missing on some of our plays after the first quarter."

Kupec, however, got in for only one series. He spent most of his time on the sidelines, working on holding the ball for extra point and field goal attempts.

That's the way it is when you're number three. But number three at Carolina in 1972 might just as well be number one.



Tar Heel starting quarterback Nick Vidnovic scrambles for the safety of the sidelines during first quarter action in Saturday's 28-18 win over Richmond. Vidnovic got in more playing time than either of Carolina's other two quarterbacks — Johnny Klise and Chris Kupec — but he still doesn't have the merry-go-round quarterback job nailed down. (Staff Photo by Cliff Kolovson.)

State, Maryland tie 24-24 as State frosh QB plays

by Carl Neal
Sports Writer

Dave Buckey had the honor of being one of the first, if not the first, freshman quarterbacks to play in a varsity game in recent history when he played in the N.C. State game Saturday, the first ACC game of the new season.

The 18-year-old freshman came in the game for the first time to give starter Bruce Shaw a breather and again when Shaw was injured in the second quarter.

Buckey, and all freshmen, are eligible for varsity play under the new freshmen-eligible rule that enables a coach to use his freshmen in the regular varsity line-up.

State Head Coach Lou Holtz appeared

to be satisfied with Buckey's playing: "Glad he's at State. He missed six practices. He's got a lot of talent, but he's got a long way to go. He handled himself well and he needs just to hang in there."

Buckey favors the freshmen-eligible rule. "There is no comparison to the junior varsity experience with the varsity," he said. "Even if I don't get to play that much with the varsity I think the experience is better."

The freshman quarterback was more critical of his performance than was his coach. "I made two or three bad reads on the option that just stopped our drive and a couple of passes that I wish I could throw over again. I couldn't say I was pleased with the way I played."

Holtz's attitude towards Buckey's playing was the same as the rest of the team. Holtz put all the blame on himself for letting a 14-point lead slip away. "If there was a turning point in the ball game it had to be with my thinking in getting a little too liberal," he said.

Holtz, as well as the whole State team, appeared to have lost a game instead of being involved in a tie.

Holtz admitted to calling "about 95 percent of the plays from the sidelines, although the quarterback could check off the plays at the line. I grab-bagged, we threw here, we ran here, we did this, we did that, we didn't play methodically — one thing off the other — like we did at first. If there is anybody to blame for us losing our momentum, it's me."

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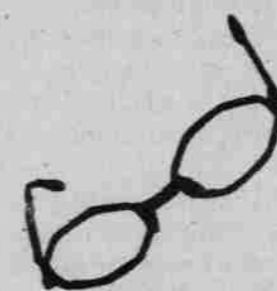
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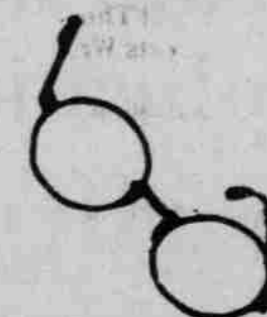
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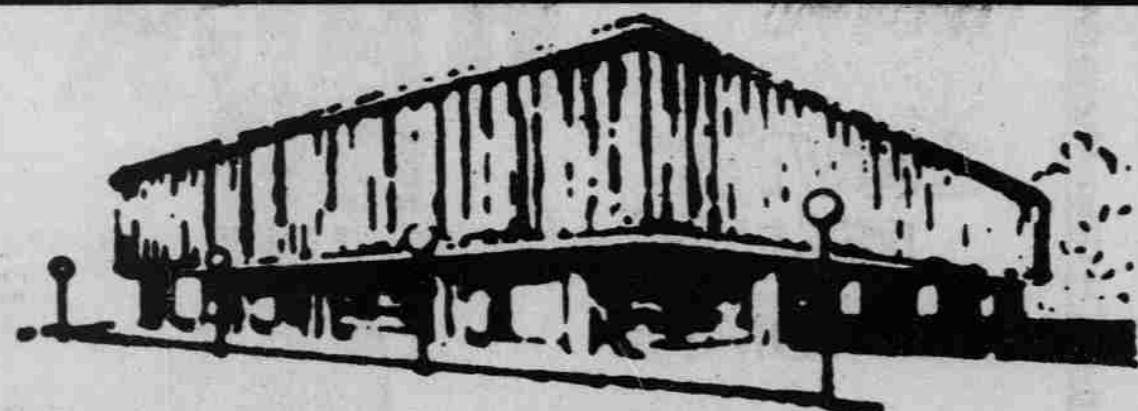
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