

Davis a charm to Heels' hoop hopes vs. Irish

By LEE PACE
Assistant Sports Editor

Although Walter Davis might look a little funny taking the court Thursday night in the Eastern Regional semifinals with a wad of white adhesive tape around two of his fingers, anyone laughing at him might get in trouble.

Particularly Notre Dame's Fighting Irish. UNC's talented forward broke the index finger on his right hand in Carolina's Atlantic Coast Conference semifinal win over N.C. State and saw limited action in the finals against Virginia the next night. After surgery the night of the ACC finals, he sat out the Tar Heels' opening NCAA tournament win over Purdue last Saturday.

But Davis will be back in the lineup when the Heels face the Irish at 8 tonight in College Park, Md. And if his performance in practice this week is any indication, his presence will be felt—on the plus side for the Heels, on the minus end for the Irish.

"It (the finger) feels a lot better," Davis said Wednesday afternoon before boarding the team bus for the airport and the flight to College Park. "I've got a lot more motion in it. It seems to have improved a lot each day."

Doctors will tape the index finger to his middle finger before the game in an effort to give the weak finger added support and protection. And although the taping would seem to hamper his natural shooting motion, the senior from Pineville has had little trouble this week getting his smooth jumper to find the bottom of the nets.

"I'm sort of surprised at my shooting," he said, "because I've been shooting pretty well."

So well, in fact, that Tar Heel Coach Dean Smith quipped the other day that he might have discovered a revolutionary new shooting aid. "I might start having all my players tape two fingers of their shooting hand together," he said at a press luncheon.

The taping, however, does not eliminate the awkwardness of trying to shoot with taped fingers.

"It's sort of hard to shoot because you need that index finger," Davis said. "It feels a lot different. That's why I've been shooting so much the last couple of days. I've been trying to get used to it so that it doesn't feel quite so awkward."

Davis injured the finger when he fell on it after attempting a layup in the State game.

"I just thought it was a jammed finger at first. A broken finger was the farthest thing from my mind," Davis, who left a 15.3 scoring void in the UNC lineup with his absence, said.

He made little actual contribution to the squad in its 75-69 win over Virginia, but just his physical presence in the lineup for several



Staff photo by Bruce Clarke

Walter Davis

minutes in the second half helped the Tar Heels in their effort to avoid Virginia's upset bid. And with center Tommy LaGarde also on the bench with an injured knee, that amounted to quite a formidable task.

"It felt bad having to sit on the bench those two games, particularly the Purdue game. In the Virginia game I knew there was a chance I could play, but against Purdue there was no way I could play," Davis said.

Smith said that Davis might be a little "gun shy" around the boards in trying to keep the finger from being reinjured. Davis agreed that the injured finger would be no help in combating a Notre Dame team that is one of the best rebounding squads in the nation.

"I might be a little hesitant in batting the ball out and tapping it with my right hand," he said.

But regardless of how much contribution he does make, Davis could be the charm to offset the Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

UNC faces Notre Dame in Eastern semifinals

Heels try to rile Digger's Irish with a St. Pat's four-corner clover

By GRANT VOSBURGH
Staff Writer

There is no truth to the rumor that UNC Head Basketball Coach Dean Smith has been out roaming the turf in Kenan Stadium in search of four-leaf clovers nor has he been referring to Carolina's Olympic basketball medals as a "crock of gold."

Such gossip has been due to UNC's NCAA Eastern Regional battle with Notre Dame tonight at 8. And wouldn't you know it—the luck of the Irish would have the game played on St. Patrick's Day.

Smith, however, remains unperturbed. At least that was the way he presented himself Tuesday as he scanned the Irish statistics.

"Looking down their roster, I don't know if they have an Irish guy on their squad," Smith said with a smile. "John O'Donnell (former UNC player and now a graduate assistant coach), represents us on St. Patrick's Day. Everybody thinks it's Mike O'Koren, but he's not Irish."

That revelation came as a surprise to many reporters present at Smith's press conference. With a name like O'Koren, with an alma mater like Hudson Catholic and with a hometown like Jersey City, it seemed only logical that the freshman recruit must have kissed the Blarney Stone somewhere along the way for his basketball skill.

O'Koren admitted, however, that the closest he ever came to being Irish was when he narrowed his college choices to North Carolina and, you guessed it, Notre Dame. "Yeah, I almost went there (Notre Dame). But, you know, I want us to win," he mildly understated.

He was then asked if he didn't have a just drop of green blood in his Carolina blue veins.

"Naw," he answered, "Yugoslavian."

So, shamrocks or not, O'Koren and his Tar Heel teammates will face the Fighting Irish in College Park, Md., and Smith is not relishing the thought of it.

"A problem for us against Purdue was a problem against Notre Dame will be getting second shots," Smith said, referring to Notre

Dame's nationally leading rebounding statistics.

Leading the assault on the boards are Bruce Flowers (6-foot-8), Toby Knight (6-foot-9) and Dave Batton (6-foot-9). The Irish's Head Coach Digger Phelps told reporters via a telephone interview Tuesday that his team works "very hard at that part of the game. Flowers, Knight and Batton are very aggressive and physical on both boards, and (Bill) Patterno (Notre Dame's sixth man) is 6-foot-6 and very strong. He's been at his peak the last two weeks."

Those four alone have been pulling down nearly 26 rebounds a game with Knight leading the way with a 10.4 rebound per game mark. As a team, Notre Dame averages 42.8 rebounds each outing while limiting opponents to just under 32.

In the scoring department, the Fighting Irish's statistics look similar to UNC's. All five starters average in double figures with Patterno just under that distinction with a 9.8 mark. Don "Duck" Williams, a smooth guard who runs a spread offense much like UNC's own Four Corners, tops the scorers with an 18.2 average. Knight is close behind with a 15.0 mark. Batton (12.4), Flowers (11.3) and Rich Branning (9.5) follow in suit.

"We have no super star," Phelps said. "But we'll have five or six people in double figures."

Notre Dame, now 22-6 and ranked 10th nationally, was ranked as high as second in the country as the Irish sped out to an early 7-0 mark. Then disaster hit South Bend. The Irish took out on a road trip and came home with five losses, dropping them from national prominence for the time being.

But someone in the Notre Dame program found a lucky charm, and the Fighting Irish finished the season with a 14-2 streak, including impressive wins over Holy Cross and San Francisco and a five-point loss to UCLA.

It was the win over the previously



Staff photo by Rouse Wilson

Non-Irishman Mike O'Koren will be doing his best to defeat the Irish when Carolina meets Notre Dame in the Eastern Regional semis tonight at 8:15 in College Park, Md.

unbeaten Dons of USF that signaled to the basketball world that the Irish were rejuvenated. Phelps, however, had sensed it before that time.

"We had some injuries in mid-season which set us back a bit. But we got Flowers back, and he makes things happen for us inside. I think the keys for us have been our scoring balance and on our rebounding."

UNC, though, has had its own share of success after a mid-season spell of bad luck when the Tar Heels lost three of four Atlantic Coast Conference games. The Heels are riding a 12-game winning streak and, at 25-4, are ranked fourth in the polls.

"Their (the Tar Heels') defense and hustle

wins games," Phelps said. "They want to keep you confused defensively. Their transition game is a key for them."

Smith agreed. "No one will try harder than our team," he said. "We may not do everything right, but these players always think they can win."

"It's a toss up," he said of the game. "I imagine one team will be in the four corners in the last minute."

So there you have it. Dean Smith is not awed by the task of playing the Fighting Irish on St. Patrick's Day. To him, it's just an everyday coincidence and nothing more.

Now, about the fact that there is a Notre Dame Street in the heart of College Park...

Three regional games on tube

The UNC-Notre Dame NCAA Eastern Regional basketball game will be televised tonight beginning at 8 on WRDU, Channel 28. Other regional games also will be televised in this area tonight. WRAL, Channel 5, will televise the UNC-Charlotte-Syracuse game beginning at 5:30. WRAL will televise a heavyweight boxing match at 10 p.m. and will switch to the Wake Forest-Southern Illinois basketball game when the fight ends. The Wake game starts at 10:37 p.m. E.S.T.

Regional pairings

EAST REGIONAL
College Park, Md.
VMI vs. Kentucky; UNC vs. Notre Dame
MIDWEST REGIONAL
Lexington, Ky.
UNC-Charlotte vs. Syracuse; Michigan vs. Detroit
MIDWEST REGIONAL
Oklahoma City, Okla.
Marquette vs. Kansas State; Wake Forest vs. Southern Illinois
WEST REGIONAL
Provo, Utah
UCLA vs. Idaho State; Utah vs. Nevada-Las Vegas

ICY PEARL

Nine swimmers in AIAWs

The culminating event of the women's swimming season begins today as the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women championships open at Brown University in Providence, R.I.

Nine women will be representing UNC as they compete against the nation's best in the three-day event. The Heels qualified for the national meet in all five medley and freestyle relays, as well as 22 individual events.

Participants for Carolina are Ann Marshall, Bonny Brown, Janice Hape, Laurie Potter, Lauren Dupree, Barb

Wallace, Gale Thompson, Anne Colvard and Andi Young.

UNC Coach Jim Wood is confident the women can improve on their No. 9 ranking of last year. Top competition will be provided by the University of Miami, defending champs for the past two years, Arizona State, UCLA, USC, Alabama and Florida.

—TOD HUGHES

FCA dinner set

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes spring banquet will be held March 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the Great Hall. Speaking will be two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin and Oakland Raider lineman Dave Rowe. Tickets are \$5.00 each and can be obtained in room 135 of Carmichael Auditorium.

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