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Deacon golfers win NCAA; Carolina settles for 12th spot

By MIKE BERARDINO
Staff Writer

Frustration reigned supreme in the Tar Heel camp after North Carolina's seventh-ranked men's golf team finished a disappointing 12th at the 89th NCAA golf championships at the Bermuda Run Country Club, May 28-31.

UNC's four-round total of 1177, 25 over par, was a distant 21 shots in back of national champion Wake Forest, which was the host school.

The top individuals for the ACC champion Tar Heels were junior Greg Parker and senior Bryan Sullivan. The duo tied for 14th with two-over totals of 290.

Scott Verplank, the much-ballyhooed senior from Oklahoma State who will soon join the PGA tour, was the individual winner with a six-under 282 total.

"We've been coming to this thing for nine years now trying to learn what it takes to get the fellas to play well," a befuddled Tar Heel coach Devon Brouse said when it was over. "I don't know."

Over the duration of the tourney, the par-72, 7,079 yard course played quite difficult, dishing out a healthy helping of heartache. UNC's contingent, with just three sub-par rounds in 20 attempts, absorbed its fair share of the wrath of Bermuda.

"It's the kind of golf course where patience is really important," Brouse said. "We talked about it before the tournament. But we just put too much pressure on ourselves and tried to force it. That was evidenced by the number of triple bogeys (five) we had."

Senior Kurt Beck, an honorable-mention All-American in 1986 who carded three of those reverse albatrosses single-handedly, said he felt "pretty damn good to get off this golf course." His numbers (76-77-78-74 — 305) supported that statement fully.

"We did have a chance," Beck said. "It just wasn't our week. We just played poorly all week and since the first day, we never got it going. We were always fighting back (from over par) and this is a tough course to fight back on."

Another Tar Heel golfer who walked away with rattled confidence and shaking head was John Hughes. The junior from Greensboro, who was named a second-team All-American, shot an opening-round 71 before seeing the perilous thread that holds a golfer's game together unravel.

Scores of 73, 75 and a closing 79 followed for the affable Hughes.

The two bright spots for North Carolina were Parker and Sullivan. Parker, a third-team All-American in 1985, avenged what many observers considered a less-than-spectacular 1986 season with a fine showing in the NAAs. After rounds of 72 and 71 on the first two days, Parker was just seven shots behind Verplank, who was off in his own little performance stratosphere with a pair of 68s.

In Friday's third-round, Parker was cruising along at two-under for the tourney when he ran into trouble at the par-four, 18th hole. With his ball in the left rough, 155 yards from the promised land, Parker tried to circumnavigate an eight-iron shot around a small pine tree and onto the green. As fate would have it, the ball stayed straight and ended up about 30 yards right of the pin and, more importantly, about a foot out of bounds.

In what could be called "The Case of the Missing Stake," an impromptu search committee, led by Brouse, tried in vain for 10 minutes to locate a single white stake along a winding ditch that, if there, would have kept Parker's ball in play. With the two-stroke penalty, Parker posted a

triple-bogey seven that saddled him with a 74 on the day and effectively took the wind out of his golfing sails.

"It was a good round except for one shot," Parker said. "I didn't have a good lie and I didn't think I could get a nine (iron) on the green."

"I still thought I could make (birdie) three. Hindsight's 20/20. If I had to do it over, I'd hit a nine."

"The stake is just very poorly marked and poorly defined," Brouse said. "It takes us out of the golf tournament. But that's life in the big city."

Even with the controversial seven, Parker was in strong contention entering the final round for a spot on the six-member undergraduate team that will represent the United States in Japan this fall. That honor also went by the boards thanks to Parker's closing 73 that was made possible by a water-logged, triple-bogey at the par-three 16th.

Sullivan, a Kitty Hawk native, saw his game and confidence soar in his last collegiate round on Saturday as he turned in a single-bogey 69, the low score by any UNC golfer at the tourney.

Sullivan analyzed his career this way: "I'm sorry that I'm leaving because it's been fun. I've learned a lot. It's helped me grow as a golfer and as a person. But it's time to move on to bigger and better things." Translation: "Look out PGA tour, here I come."

Afterward, Brouse reflected on what was supposed to be a rebuilding year for UNC. "When we lost (touring pro) Davis (Love), everybody kind of wrote us off," he said. "From that standpoint, it was a good year. We'll be remembered for being conference champions, not for coming in 12th at the NAAs."

NOTES — UNC freshman **Brendan Kennedy** had a tough time of it in his first NCAA appearance. A final round 74, including a 36 on the front side, should ease the strain of a combined 19-over-par performance.

The fact that Wake Forest won the title made the NAAs all the more frustrating for the Tar Heels, who defeated the Demon Deacons several

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