

Sports

Tar Heels travel to Plains for showdown with No. 4 Tigers

By LANGSTON WERTZ
Staff Writer

Last season, when the Auburn Tigers rolled into Kenan Stadium expecting an easy win, UNC met them with some staunch defense and some inspired team play.

But during the Tar Heels' eventual 20-10 heartbreak loss to Auburn, sophomore running back Kennard Martin was nowhere to be found. The Winston-Salem native had suffered a strained knee and a pulled hamstring two weeks earlier against Georgia Tech.

Saturday afternoon at 2:30 (1:30 Central time), when UNC carries its 0-3 record to Auburn, Ala., to face the undefeated and fourth-ranked Tigers (3-0), Martin will be an integral part of the Tar Heels' offense.

On the strength of a 14-carry, 160-yard performance against Louisville last weekend, Martin was named by coach Mack Brown the starting tailback for UNC.

"Kennard's running was really a big plus for us," said Brown, following the team's sixth consecutive defeat, dating back to last year.

"We've talked about needing to get big plays from our tailbacks, either Kennard or Torin (Dorn, the other tailback), in order to be a good offensive team," Brown said. "Kennard gave us those big plays last week. He really showed for the first time that he has a chance to be an outstanding player."

Martin will need to continue running at his current pace of 7.2 yards per carry if the Tar Heels are to have any chance against the Tigers, whose defense has given up but two touchdowns all season and allowed 32 rushing yards — on 35 attempts.

"Auburn is probably the best team we've played to this point," Brown said. "They've given up two scores — one to the rush and one to the pass, so you can see their balance."

Tracey Roker, a senior left tackle, is the center of the Tigers' defensive unit, which is the country's fourth best in total defense.

Last week, during Auburn's 38-6 blowout of Tennessee, Roker and the Tiger defense caused three turnovers in the first quarter that quarterback Reggie Slack and the Tiger offense turned into scores. In the second half, Tennessee managed but two first downs and had minus-two yards rushing.

"Roker is their star defensively," Brown said, "and he's probably the best lineman in America. But you can't do things just to stop him because he's got such good people around him."

Along the line, Roker, a 6-foot-3, 278-pounder, is surrounded by size. Lot of it. Starting noseguard Benji Roland lines up at 6-1, 270, and right tackle Ron Stallworth stands 6-5 and weighs 258.

What looms large for tailback Martin and the Tar Heels is the fact that Roker and the Tiger defense haven't allowed an opposing running back to break the 100-yard barrier since 1986 — 16 games ago — when Alabama's Bobby Humphrey scrambled for 204 yards in the Crimson Tide's 21-17 loss.

"We'll line up and try to run it straight at them," Martin said when asked how the Tar Heels would attack the imposing Tiger defense. "They have a little more experience than Oklahoma, and I think they're a better team."

"But we've always played well against good teams, and our team is excited."

The Tar Heels will obviously need a stellar performance from Martin, wide receiver Randy Marriott and the rest of the UNC offense, but the defense will be put to a very large test as well.

Tigers' starting tailback James

Joseph has rushed for 271 yards in 32 carries, an 8.5-yard average, and has scored three touchdowns. His runningmate, Vincent Harris, also has three scores and 139 yards in 25 carries.

Quarterback Slack, the SEC's leading passer, has had an outstanding year (40-of-60 for 668 yards), throwing six touchdown strikes to the likes of Freddy Weyand (8 catches, 108 yards, 1 TD) and James Joseph (7-130, 1 TD).

"Reggie is throwing 60 percent and they are very balanced — much like South Carolina," Brown said. "They're simply one of the best teams in the country, and they'll have to help us some in order for us to win it."

"People say they're coming off of a letdown game (against Tennessee). But we're not talking about a team which is excited about playing us coming off our performance last week. They're a team playing for an SEC championship and a national championship. My experience is that teams like this don't have a letdown."

And that will make Martin's and the Tar Heels' job that much harder.

"I think starting against Auburn will be exciting," Martin said. "When you play these types of teams you can measure yourself to their standards, and one day we want to be a top team and have other guys come in here and say, 'Wow, we're playing North Carolina.'"

UNC is not one of the top teams yet, and playing Saturday against a top team the Tar Heels will have their backs against a very hard wall.

"We told them that every odd in America is stacked against you," Brown said. "All you can do is go out and play the best you can. But the thing is that if we play emotionally and at our best and Auburn doesn't play emotionally and at their best, we could still lose and that's tough."



DTH/David Minton

Freshman Hamp Greene has proven that he is more than just an average placekicker

Greene's sort of homecoming

By MIKE BERARDINO
Sports Editor

Forget Gordie Lockbaum and all the hype he received for his two-way play last season at Holy Cross. Hamp Greene was the real king of full-time football in 1987.

As a senior at Montgomery (Ala.) Academy, Greene played tailback on offense and free safety on defense. But that wasn't all.

When the offense stalled, he dropped back to punt. When the defense did its job, he would return punts. When the offense scored, he'd kick the extra point. If things broke down just before reaching the end zone, he'd try the field goal.

Then, after stopping briefly along the sideline to trade high-fives with his coaches and teammates, Greene would grab a tee and head for the 40. He also kicked off.

In short, Hamp Greene did everything but lead cheers for his high school team, which won the Alabama 1-A state championship last year.

"It's funny when they talk about the defense being on the field too long," says the Jose Oquendo of high school football. "There were games when I never came off the field."

That's why you'll have to forgive Greene if he acts a little antsy on the

UNC sideline these days. The freshman's role for Mack Brown's first Tar Heel team is singular — Greene is the placekicker.

"Just coming in for a play and then waiting for a quarter, a half before going back out there takes some getting used to, both mentally and physically," Greene says. "A lot of players that play other positions like to get fired up and excited. Sometimes that doesn't work for a kicker. You have to be within yourself and calm, and you need to be focused on what you need to do, instead of going crazy."

For someone like Greene, who is used to being part of virtually every play in every game, the temptation to lapse into sideline spectating is strong. Greene has a method of overcoming that, though.

"You need to make sure you don't get carried away in the game," Greene says. "You have to realize what you're there for. You're not there to be a cheerleader, you're there to kick."

This weekend the temptation to cheer for his teammates may be greater than usual for Greene. Both of his parents attended the University of Alabama — Auburn's archrival — and young Hamp Hunter Greene IV grew up wearing the Crimson and White from head to toe.

Five of the last eight Novembers, the Greene family has made the 1½-hour drive to Birmingham to root for the Tide in their annual bragging-

rights showdown with the Tigers.

So how did Greene, who led his team to the state title and has kicked a 59-yard field goal in practice, escape the clutches of Alabama's dueling football factories?

"It's sort of strange, but neither school was recruiting a kicker last year," Greene says. "In a way I wanted to stay in state, because you're surrounded with all the hype. But early in my senior year, I could tell it wasn't going to work out, it wasn't meant to be."

Louisiana State, another Southeastern Conference powerhouse, then became Greene's top choice, followed closely by Davidson and Troy State, smaller schools where he could have continued his multi-positional play.

But LSU already had a top-notch kicker in David Brownlyke, so when Mack Brown came a-calling with his promise of instant opportunity in Chapel Hill, Greene listened.

"I really liked LSU a lot, but the fact that I could come up here and have the opportunity to play as a freshman influenced me," Greene says. "That was something that excited me — the fact that I had a chance to come in and contribute as a freshman. (The UNC coaches) told me the job was wide open."

Like many others, Greene was impressed with Brown.

"He's a real good guy, a class act," Greene says.

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