

Shannon Higgins: The best in women's soccer today?



DTH file photo

Top that! UNC midfielder Shannon Higgins was named collegiate Player of the Year as a junior in 1988

UNC spikes Wolfpack in three

By D.J. HOOGERVORST

The UNC volleyball team showed the attending Carolina Fever members Tuesday night what a victory over N.C. State was like, drubbing the Wolfpack in three games, 15-2, 15-3, 15-13.

The Tar Heels, coming off a split in the weekend tournament in Chicago, displayed their tremendous talent for the rowdy, supportive Fever fans and to the rest of their supporters. After the victory, UNC's record is 8-5.

This season, the North Carolina talents had been displayed inconsistently, but against N.C. State, the Tar Heels' play was strong throughout. UNC coach Peggy Bradley-Doppes credited the newfound consistency to the lineup.

"We found a starting lineup," she said. "We have a lot of talent and it's

just been a matter of finding six people that work well on the court together."

The opening six for UNC were co-captains Lisa Joffs and Sharon German, Liz Berg, Paula Martin, Chris White and setter Amy Peistrup. Unlike early this year, Bradley-Doppes chose not to substitute much. Only Patti Hopkins broke the starting lineup, twice in game three for defensive purposes.

"The more the kids get the experience, the better they're going to play," Bradley-Doppes said. "Even tonight, we had three first-year players on the floor at all times. We're still a young team, but we're getting more consistent and a lot stronger."

Berg opened the match with her tough jump serve, forcing N.C. State into two ball-control errors. The errors, added to two kills by German and a block by

Joffs and German, made it 5-0.

The Tar Heels cruised from there. In the second game, North Carolina continued to serve strong, but Berg stole the show with a sensational game. The 5-foot-9 hitter spiked, dinked, served, blocked, dug, etc. In essence, she was everywhere.

"Liz has really come into her own," Bradley-Doppes said. "She made all-tournament this past weekend, she's our primary receiver and she's just coming on."

Game three saw N.C. State take advantage of some sloppy Tar Heel play early, as the Wolfpack jumped out to a 6-0 lead.

The Tar Heels took time out, composed themselves and pulled themselves back into the game at 9-9. More North Carolina miscues put the Wolfpack back in front 13-11.

North Carolina would not let the game slip away, though. Peistrup served an ace and Joffs served a humorous winner off the head of N.C. State's Danielle Kroll to tie it.

Then, Martin spiked off a Wolfpack block, and German hit an intimidating back row spike to end the match.

"I give State credit for coming back in the third game," Bradley-Doppes said. "If it had been another team, they probably would have lied down and died a little bit. It was good that they pushed us, it made us start working a bit."

age of 1.12, has helped shore up a defense that Bolowich said was the team's weakness coming into the season.

"The direction the team is going is a lot better than the team went at the beginning of the season," Bolowich said. "We were very shaky in the back in the beginning of the season, and we settled some problems there."

Jennison also can not afford to overlook Dean Herritty, of Dublin, Ireland, Coastal Carolina's answer to UNC assist leader Chad Ashton. Herritty has notched five goals and 14 assists this season.

Ashton, a senior out of Denver, Colo., has seven assists on the season and holds the all-time UNC record of 38 career assists. Last Wednesday, Ashton blossomed as a goal scorer with two goals in the Tar Heels' 3-1 victory over Campbell. "He's a complete player. It was just a question of time," Bolowich said.

Ashton has been dishing out many of his assists to the Tar Heels' leading scorer, Derek Missimo. However, Missimo has been held scoreless in his last two games — with only four shots on goal against Campbell and none against Virginia.

While seven UNC players, including Missimo, hail from Texas, Coastal Carolina's squad has a distinctly international flavor with 13 foreigners, nine of whom start for the Chants.

Chants for an upset? Soccer answer today

By ERIC WAGNON

The Coastal Carolina men's soccer team rides into Chapel Hill for today's matchup against UNC with upset in mind. The Chanticleers, named after the boastful rooster in Chaucer's *Cantebury Tales*, have plenty to crow about with an 8-1 record. Eleventh-ranked North Carolina, at 6-3-1, returns to Finley Field for the 4 p.m. game after a tough 3-0 loss to top-ranked Virginia on Sunday.

Coastal Carolina has experienced a miraculous turnaround this season, coming off last year's 4-14-1 campaign. The Chanticleers have won four in a row after suffering their lone loss of the season, a 2-1 decision against Clemson. The Tar Heels have won three of their last four games and defeated Clemson 2-1 in the fourth game of their season. "(Coastal Carolina) beat all the other teams and lost barely to Clemson and — as far as I heard — were the better team," UNC head coach Elmar Bolowich said. "So we are really a little bit worried going into that game, because we cannot take Coastal Carolina easy."

The Chants' turnaround may be credited to top-notch play from a large contingent of freshmen players and star forward Hilmar Arnason. Chanticleer head coach Paul Banta expects to start seven freshmen against the Tar Heels. Leading the nation in scoring with 12 goals and six assists, Arnason, of Reykjavik, Iceland, will be Tar Heel freshman goalkeeper Watson Jennison's main worry.

Jennison's counterpart in the Chanticleer net will be Reggie Pierre, of Hollywood, Fla. Pierre finished last season with a 1.82 goals against average and has improved this season to a current average of 1.11.

Jennison, meanwhile, has posted two shutouts this season, allowing just four goals in the last four games — three of those goals coming in the Virginia loss. Jennison, who has a goals against aver-

She's the key to the #1 Tar Heels

By SCOTT GOLD

Staff Writer
Bo Jackson. Michael Jordan. Jose Canseco. Dexter Manley.

Arguably the best at what they do. Definitely the flashiest at what they do.

These two things often seem to go hand in hand. Sure, they all have the logs of quotes in their heads — those postgame quotes that spill out of their mouths like booze spilling in Chicago this past week.

"Well, uh, we're just trying to take this one game at a time, and my teammates really do the work, and the entire staff helps me out, and my coach is groovy, nice tie, Mr. Costas, blah, blah ..."

Yeah. Shannon Higgins, a women's soccer extraordinaire hailing from Kent, Washington, means it. She's been called the best women's soccer player in the world today. She's been called the best in the short but miraculous history of the game.

"I don't look at it that way," the 5-foot-4 senior said. "I don't look forward to any awards or to any championships. We just play. We go out and try to set personal and team goals, and keep our intensity up. It's easy this year. I think this may be our best team ever."

An integral part of that team, Higgins is one of the most prolific scorers in Tar Heel history. As of Sunday's match with second-ranked Colorado College, she has 33 goals in her career (ranking her number 10 on North Carolina's all-time list) and 39 assists (fifth), for an impressive total of 105 career points.

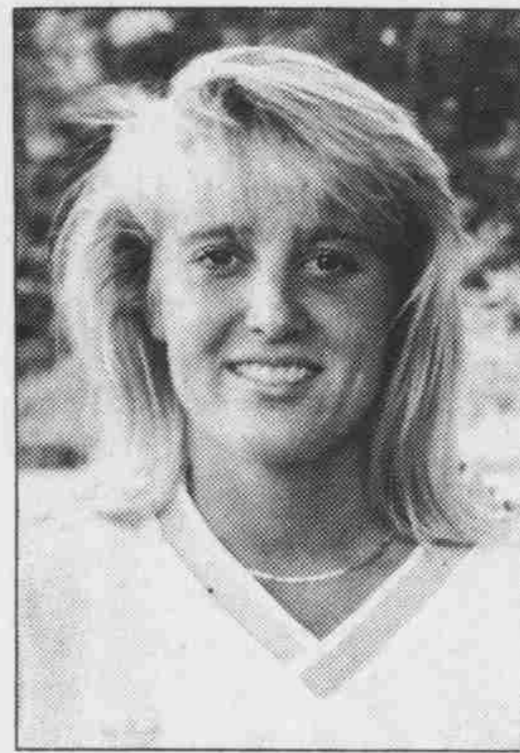
Though not an official stat, there is no doubt that Higgins also ranks in another category — awards received.

Though she earned perhaps her greatest laurel by earning *Soccer America's* Player of the Year in 1988, she has also been named All-American, All-South, a U.S. Olympic Festival player, the Most Valuable Player in the Final Four and All-ACC. Higgins has also been recognized on the ACC Academic Honor Roll.

Whew. From Higgins' midfield position, however, worth cannot be measured in statistics and awards alone.

Two years ago, Higgins' first on the U.S. National Team, coach Anson Dorrance, who also coaches UNC, deemed her the official "playmaker" of the squad. Though relatively unestablished compared to ex-Tar Heel All-Americans Lori Henry, April Heinrichs and a slew of others, Dorrance somehow knew of Higgins' future.

"What we told everyone on the team was 'If Higgins and someone else are open, Higgins always gets the ball,'" Dorrance said. "What I wanted to do with her was demonstrate my trust in her ability with the ball because she is



Shannon Higgins

one of the safest and most dangerous players I've ever seen in my life.

"She has the ability to take the ball at midfield and do the absolute worst thing possible to the opposing team."

Though Higgins usually talks with her feet and not with her tongue, she will admit that she has few outstanding faults on the field.

"I try to be an all-around player, and I guess I do OK," she said. "I may have good organization and all that. But I'm not good in the air. I'm not fast — in fact, I'm one of the slowest players on the team. I'd like to be the best in all categories, but I know that realistically that can never be reached."

To fans and opposing players, Higgins appears invincible on the field. Often, while in the midst of outrunning three or four defenders, she will look

one way, fake another and pass yet a third. Give her another foot, and she could probably take on most teams alone.

"The reason she's so remarkable," Dorrance said, "is that her vision and understanding of the game is at a level like very few players I've ever seen. It's like having a coach on the field to direct traffic. Invariably after it hits her foot, somewhere on the field it's going to damage the other team."

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Higgins' performance this season is her successful follow-up to last year's stupendous results, including setting the all-time ACC records for points (43) and assists (17). Though last season she was an all-around performer, her game seemed to concentrate more on the opponent's goal than on the entire field as a unit.

This season, however, Higgins divides her time between defensive and offensive maneuvers, stymieing nearly every attack that comes her way. Once she wins the ball, she drives upfield, remaining under utter control and avoiding all threats until a plausible attack structure develops.

"Her game's up a level from last year," Dorrance said. "She's all over the field now, and she's just gone leaps and bounds. She's making runs down the right flank, she's making runs down the left flank, she's tracking behind her wing midfielders, covering defensively, she's running for it herself, and she's still getting forward and scoring a lot."

"The thing about it is that she's playing even better now than she did last year. She's unbelievable. Unbelievable."

As the Diceman would say, end of story.

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