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NO. 19 FSU FALLS TO NO. 1 UNC IN ACC FINAL; NCAA TOURNEY UP NEXT

Seminoles place program-high three players on All-ACC Tournament Team after historic run to the finals.

Winston-Salem, NC – The Florida State soccer team broke new ground for the program when they stepped on the field at Sunday's ACC Championship but unfortunately they came up against an old foe in consensus No. 1 North Carolina. The 13-time ACC Champion Tar Heels (19-0-0, 7-0-0) used a four-goal outburst in two spans of three minutes near the start of each half and downed the 19th-ranked Seminoles (14-7-1, 4-3-0) 4-0 in front of 1,837 fans at W. Dennie Spry Stadium on the campus of Wake Forest University. The game represented the first final for FSU compared to the 14th consecutive final for the nation's premier soccer program.

"First of all, we want to congratulate North Carolina on its ACC Championship," said head coach Patrick Baker. "They have proven they are the class of the country and we found that out first-hand this afternoon."

Coming into Sunday's final, UNC had won 27 straight matches including the 2000 ACC Championship and the 2000 NCAA Championship. The 17-time National Champion Tar Heels had also won the last 13 consecutive conference championships by an average score of almost 4-1 (46-10 combined scores) and had shutout its last four ACC Championship opponents 4-0, 3-0, 4-0 and 4-0.

The Tar Heels wasted little time in showing why they are considered the nation's most dominant team. In just the third-minute of the game, ACC Tournament MVP Alyssa Ramsey made a dangerous run down the left wing getting end line against the FSU defense. She then made a pin-point cross to the back post where Sarah Randolph scored the first goal of her career on a top-shelf volley putting UNC up 1-0 before FSU really had a chance to catch its breath.

Just over two minutes later, forward Anne Morrell found an open space in the middle of the field and split the Seminole defense with a pass that found Ramsey inside of the FSU penalty box. She fired a blast to the upper corner of the net at the right post leaving freshman Kerry York with no chance at a save. With just 4:57 off of the clock, FSU found itself down 2-0,

"I was a little disappointed at how we started the championship game," said Baker. "I don't know if it was nerves with it being our first ACC Championship but to give up two big-five goals right at the beginning doesn't help your cause against a team as talented as North Carolina."

Florida State continued to battle Carolina and almost got on the board in the 16th-minute when sophomore Summer Corum made a fantastic run down the left wing out-pacing the UNC defense to the end line. She then struck a perfect cross to the back post where Maren Vik Edvardsen's header shot went just wide of the post.

Freshman Kerry York then once-again rose to the occasion as she had done in both ACC Tournament games against Maryland and Virginia. In the 31st-minute, UNC gained control of the ball after a Seminole clearing pass was deflected back into the box and right onto the foot of Amy Whittier. Whittier fired a point-blank shot that York smothered keeping the Seminoles alive.

"When you face UNC, it's almost if you are headed right into a storm and you just try to hold on," said Baker. "The wind and rain is in your face and you just try to see your way through it. They go

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100 miles per hour. They are athletic, they are fast and just when you think you have solved their pressure the next player is there to close you down. It's suffocating and they did a good job of establishing that right off the bat in the first half."

As the teams came out from halftime, FSU looked to get back in the game and put together one of the best 10 minute spans the team has ever had against the Tar Heels. The Seminoles were able to control play and keep possession while putting UNC on its heels having to defend against a rejuvenated Seminole attack.

Just two minutes into the second period, All-ACC Tournament team selection Heather Dyche sent a long free kick to the far post. Sophomore Amber Tollefson, also an All-ACC Tournament team selection, broke away from a pack of UNC defenders and stretched out to volley a shot at the UNC net from inside the six-yard box. The shot just missed at the back post but was the second great scoring chance for FSU in the match.

The Seminoles got another dangerous opportunity just a few minutes later when freshman Jez Ratliff pressured UNC goalkeeper Kristin DePlatchett on a pass back to the senior keeper. Ratliff's pressure forced a bad pass that Corum picked off on the right side of the field about 20 yards from goal. Corum took the ball to the end line when she saw DePlatchett out of position and sent a cross into the box. The pass never reached its target though, as a Tar Heel defender was able to block the pass before a Seminole had a chance to put the ball away.

After controlling play at the start of the second, the Seminoles seemed to finally get a break when All-American defender Danielle Borgman seemed to have a pass come off of her hand inside the UNC 18-yard box but a penalty was never called. On the scramble to clear the ball out, DePlatchett went down with an injury and the delay seemed to take FSU out of its rhythm.

Just moments after the Tar Heel keeper got back on her feet, UNC began to attack again and extended its lead to 3-0 in the 55th-minute. Ramsey got in behind the Seminoles and fired a shot at the FSU net that freshman All-ACC Tournament team selection Katie Beal saved off of the FSU line. The rebound went right to Anne Remy who scored from about five yards out.

Just like the first half of the match and the regular season meeting between the two teams, UNC followed a goal with another just minutes later. Remy once again hurt FSU when she sent a perfect ball into Morrell about six-yards away from the Seminole net where she buried a shot at the near post extending the Tar Heels to a 4-0 lead.

Florida State had a couple of final chances to ruin UNC's 13th shutout of the season. In the 62nd-minute, Ratliff streaked in behind the Tar Heel defense and was just inches away from picking up the pass before DePlatchett slid in and grabbed the pass off of her foot. Just seven minutes later, Tollefson had another great chance when her header shot was sent on goal but saved by the UNC keeper.

"Whenever you face Carolina, its always the same," said All-ACC first-teamer Cindy Schofield. "You can't take too many touches because as soon as you do they will have three players around you. You have to defend your heart out because they never have an off day."

The Tar Heels defense was even more impressive than their offense in limiting FSU to a season-low three shots with only one going on goal. In the last two matches, FSU was held without a goal through 240 minutes after having its best offensive showing of the season in a 7-2 quarterfinal win over

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Maryland. North Carolina was also successful at containing Schofield, the ACC's leading goal scorer, holding the junior to no shots for the second consecutive game.

"They have three extremely good backs and we couldn't get any through balls because their speed just killed us," said Schofield. "We just weren't able to get forward as a team because we were so busy defending."

The win marked the third consecutive victory for North Carolina over FSU since the Seminoles stunned the Tar Heels 3-2 in double overtime last season at the Seminole Soccer complex. Before that win, UNC had won the first eight meetings between the two schools.

"We expected to win," said Baker. "We prepared our team to win but we just didn't have it today. I don't think fatigue really played a part in it after the four overtime game against Virginia. They are just a better team and more talented than we are right now."

The Seminoles will return to Tallahassee where they will gather at the Moore Athletic Center Monday at 3:00 p.m. to watch the NCAA selection show. Florida State seems to be a lock for selection after its unprecedented run to the ACC finals and top 20 ranking. If selected, it will mark the second consecutive year that the Seminoles have advanced to the NCAA Tournament after never reaching the post-season in the first five years of the program's existence.

"I am very proud of our performance here at the ACC Championships this week," said Baker. "We will now begin to prepare for the NCAA Tournament We have faced three NCAA Tournament teams this week in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina and our last two games have been against two of the best team's we could possibly face in the NCAA's in Carolina and Virginia. We feel like we've seen just about everything in the last three games and hopefully we'll be able to learn some lessons from this."

NOTES — After its unprecedented run to the ACC Finals, the Seminoles placed three players on the All-ACC Tournament team for the first time in the school's history. Last season, FSU received its first two All-ACC Tournament selections after advancing to the semi-finals. This season, freshman Katie Beal, also named to the All-ACC Rookie team, sophomore Amber Tollefson (an All-ACC second team selection) and senior Heather Dyche were honored following Sunday's final.

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Soccer Box Score (Final) The Automated ScoreBook For Soccer

No. 19 Florida State vs No. 1 North Carolina (Nov 12, 2001 at ACC Championship)

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Alt. Official: Roger Morton; Scorer: Bill Newton; Offsides: No. 19 Florida State 2, No. 1 North Carolina 2. UNC ACC Champions