

Football hopes for fresh start

By Brooke Pryor
Staff Writer

The investigation into North Carolina's football team in June 2010 jump-started a season of what-ifs and could-have-beens. Robert Quinn and Greg Little were ruled permanently ineligible, and Marvin Austin was dismissed from the program — altering the Tar Heels' vision for the 2010 campaign.

Yet despite the multitudes of obstacles — benched players and an injury to senior tight end Zack Pianalto — the Tar Heels finished with an 8-5 record and won a double overtime game against Tennessee in the Music City Bowl.

The Tar Heels' talent was further recognized at the 2011 NFL draft, where a nation-high nine players were drafted.

Quinn was the first to go, drafted in the first round by the St. Louis Rams with the No. 14 overall pick.

Three more UNC players, Bruce Carter, Austin and Little, were picked up by teams in the second round.

But all of that is in the books. And as spring settled on Chapel Hill, coach Butch Davis began looking towards a new season, a new team and another chance at success.

"I think that we're more athletic than we've been any time since I've been here," Davis said. "We're big-



The Tar Heels walk onto the field at Kenan Stadium during the homecoming game against William and Mary.

ger, we're certainly a little bit stronger than we've been in the past, and there's certainly a lot more depth."

With the departure of quarterback T.J. Yates, the reins have been handed over to redshirt sophomore Bryn Renner. Spectators got an early preview of Renner in the spring game on April 9, where he completed 9 of 13 attempts for 123 yards and a touchdown.

"He's energetic, he's enthusiastic, and I think that's contagious," Davis said. "I think he's excited that he feels like he's worked as an understudy, he's earned his opportunity, he's been very patient and he's just very much looking forward to the season."

Renner will be looking down field for last year's breakout wide receivers, junior Dwight Jones and sophomore Erik Highsmith. Last season, Jones led the team in receiving yards with 946 and averaged 72.8 yards per game.

After redshirting last season, senior tailback Ryan Houston looks to make a return to the field this fall after sustaining a broken right scapula in the spring game.

Defensively, UNC returns defensive tackle Quinton Coples, who is thought to be a potential first-round draft pick in 2012.

Though UNC will take the

field in the season opener against James Madison University armed with veterans, the team will still have to adjust to a young leader and players with limited game experience.

"Leadership is something we're still waiting to emerge on this football team, both offensively and defensively," Davis said. "And then obviously it's building the depth and experience. We can't empower these kids with experience — they're going to have to gain it on their own."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

Women's basketball looks to recruits

By Brandon Moree
Staff Writer

When Stanford's Ogwumike sisters bounced the North Carolina women's basketball team from the NCAA tournament in the Sweet 16, they ended the college careers of the both the engine and the spark plug of UNC's team.

The engine was the two-pronged backcourt attack of Cetera DeGraffenreid and Italee Lucas.

The duo combined for more than 24 points per game in the 2010-11 season.

Lucas, who averaged 16.2 points per game, was the team's leading scorer this season and knocked down 79 3-pointers.

But in addition to on the court,

Lucas was a leader in huddle, too.

"You want to go on the court with no regrets, no what-ifs," Lucas said. "I tell the team, no excuses. If you're at one level and you feel like you're tired, there's another level you can reach."

DeGraffenreid finished the season with an ACC-best 2.32 assist to turnover ratio in addition to a team-high 96 steals.

But just as important to the team's success in 2010-11 was the spark plug — senior Jessica Breland.

The 6-foot-3 Bertie High School product was the second leading scorer on the team this year after missing the entire 2009-2010 season while battling Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Breland was the third best shot-blocker in the ACC in her senior campaign — swatting almost two shots a game. She totalled 295 blocks in her career.

"What she's gone through with the cancer and all, she's just so mature — talking all the time. There's no doubt this is her team," coach Sylvia Hatchell said at the beginning of the season. "Of course I respect her so much, her leadership and all."

The loss of Breland does not leave the Tar Heels defenseless in the paint. Waltiea Rolle and senior Chay Shegog will still be clogging up the lane for the Tar Heels this season after playing vital roles both from the bench and in the starting lineup.

With Nicole Powell's contribution off the end of the bench, the seniors combined for more than 45 percent of the team's total offense this season — leaving big holes for the newcomers to fill.

Point guard Brittany Roundtree of Potter's House Christian High School in Jacksonville, Fla., and Bishop McGuinness High School guard Megan Buckland will be the new blood in the backcourt in 2011.

Buckland won the North Carolina 1A state championship in all four years at Bishop McGuinness and was the title game MVP in 2011.

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