



Tar Heels succumb to late-season stinger



DTH/JAMES CARRAS

Chay Shegog muscles her way around Georgia Tech's Chelsea Regins and into the paint in Carmichael Arena on Thursday night en route to tying the team-high 13 points. Italee Lucas also had 13 points in the loss.

BY EVAN G. MARLOW
STAFF WRITER

The No. 13 North Carolina women's basketball team is wondering what has gone wrong as they head toward the end of the season on a slide.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL Thursday night at home, the Tar Heels Georgia Tech 64 lost their third straight game, 64-57 to Georgia Tech.

Regardless of the outcome of Sunday's ACC finale against Duke, the Tar Heels now can finish no higher than fifth in the ACC standings. That means they will have to play on the first day of the conference tournament, which begins on Thursday.

Senior guard Italee Lucas said she went into the game thinking it was a must-win and doesn't know what has caused the three-game skid.

"If we could figure it out, we probably would have won today," Lucas said.

Lucas and Chay Shegog led the Tar Heels with 13 points each but it wasn't enough to win what was an extremely close game until the final minutes.

The Tar Heels started the game strong, but Georgia Tech's full court press and double-team pressure zone in the halfcourt gave UNC trouble from the start. The pressure also gave the Yellow Jackets in the game early.

Yellow Jackets caused 22 turnovers in the game, and UNC's offense looked out of sync for most of the night. Yet despite UNC's poor play, Georgia Tech only held a two-point lead with less than 10 minutes to go in the second half.

That's when Georgia Tech center Sasha Goodlett, who scored all 13 of her points in the second half, made a tough layup and drew a foul from UNC's Jessica Breland.

Goodlett then made the free throw and Georgia Tech never lost the lead the rest of the game.

UNC kept it close toward the end but Goodlett's big second half in the post and Alex Montgomery's 22 points proved to be too much.

"She started crashing the boards more and they started slipping her on screens," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said. "They got a lot of points off of offensive rebounds."

This marks the Tar Heels' third straight loss not only on the season, but also to Georgia Tech.

"When I took the job eight years ago I started thinking I want my program to look like North Carolina," Georgia Tech coach MaChelle Joseph said. "To be able to not only compete with North Carolina but to have three wins in a row against them is something I'm very proud of."

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Full-court press stops UNC

BY MEGAN WALSH
SENIOR WRITER

When Georgia Tech's women's basketball team converted an inbound pass into an easy layup on Thursday, North Carolina point guard Cetera DeGraffenreid assumed her normal routine.

But as the senior began her muscle-memory trip taking the ball up the court, she was met by a full-court press from a pair of Yellow Jackets with other plans for the Tar Heel possession.

Georgia Tech's double-team pressure stripped DeGraffenreid of the ball and immediately converted the steal into an easy jumper.

The steal was quickly followed by 12 more, as an aggressive Yellow Jacket defense went on to smother UNC in the Tar Heels' third loss in a row.

"One of the things we do is we change defenses a lot," Georgia Tech coach MaChelle Joseph said. "We press three different ways. But I have to credit my kids because night in and night out, we've played almost — what, I don't know our record right now — 30 some games and our kids have pressed 40 minutes the entire season."

Turning to long passes and drives through pairs and even trios of Yellow Jacket defenders, North Carolina gave up 14 turnovers by the end of the first half.

The second half only added to the pain, as Ga. Tech went on to score 18 points off UNC's 22 giveaways.

Struggles with overcoming the defense came as a surprise to the Tar Heels, who had no trouble escaping the Yellow Jackets' pressure on the road at the beginning of ACC play. Although UNC went on to lose by one point at the hands of a late Yellow Jacket comeback then, the pressure was handled in a much

more effective manner.

"What we did tonight, it worked against Georgia Tech," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said. "I thought we broke it pretty easily down there."

Desperate for quick escapes around a swarming zone defense, UNC attempted frantic assists as the back-and-forth game's score remained tight.

"We were trying to pick up the tempo," Hatchell said. "But we didn't have as much trouble against the press down there as we did tonight. I just thought we panicked a little bit, instead of being patient and getting the cutters coming through."

But the press wasn't the only aspect of Georgia Tech's defense that stifled North Carolina's struggling offense.

The changing nature of the Yellow Jackets' pressure also stemmed confusion on the court for UNC.

"We don't know what's going on," junior Chay Shegog said. "A lot of our turnovers happened in the half-court too, so it wasn't just the press that bothered us."

After turning to a full-court press of their own in the final minutes of play, the Tar Heels continued to fall victim to the Yellow Jackets' aggression.

With less than 30 seconds to go, Ga. Tech's pressure was unfailing as the team sent two players towering over senior Italee Lucas' attempts at saving grace, forcing UNC to a call a time out to escape.

"It was difficult," Lucas said. "They threw (the full-court press) at us last time we played at their place. Maybe they were a little more aggressive."

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