

Heels Clobber Elon In Season Opener

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Giovani Bernard had three first-half touchdowns and North Carolina had its biggest scoring day in 17 years to beat Elon 62-0 on Saturday in the debut of new coach Larry Fedora. Bernard had a 59-yard TD run down the left sideline, a 6-

yard scoring catch and a 70-yard punt return for a score down the right sideline -- all by the 12-minute mark of the second quarter. Bernard finished with 93 yards rushing and 203 all-purpose yards before leaving late in the first half with an apparent injury, the most impressive performer in the Tar Heels' new no-huddle spread attack.

Bryn Renner threw for 236 yards and three touchdowns for the Tar Heels, who had 524 total yards in both teams' opener.

North Carolina finished three points shy of tying the school record and had its best output since beating Ohio 62-0 under Mack Brown in September 1995.

It was also the Tar Heels' first shutout since beating Duke 38-0 to close the 1999 season.

Thomas Wilson threw for 99 yards on a forgettable day for the Phoenix, an FCS school located about 40 miles west of Chapel Hill and coming off a five-win season. Wilson struggled to get the ball to receiver Aaron Mellette, who set a Southern Conference record with 1,639 yards to go with 12 touchdowns last season but had just two catches for 9 yards Saturday.

Elon finished with 170 total yards against UNC's new 4-2-5 defense.

Bernard ran for 1,253 yards and 12 touchdowns last season, becoming the first UNC player to rush for 1,000 yards in a season since 1997. The sophomore tailback was en route to a huge day before heading to the locker room shortly before halftime, and he wasn't spotted on the UNC sideline when the team came out for the second half.

By that point, however, the Tar Heels led 41-0 for their highest-scoring first half in three years.

Bernard's uncertain status aside -- Fedora doesn't talk about injuries unless they're season-ending ones -- it was hard to script a better start on the field for the Tar Heels under their third coach in as many seasons. Fedora left Southern Mississippi to take over a program reeling from an NCAA investigation of improper benefits and academic misconduct, which led to the firing of Butch Davis just before last year's training camp and forced the Tar Heels to play under interim coach Everett Withers last season.

Photo Courtesy: Giovani Bernard, UNC Athletics