

Tar Heels Down Florida Atlantic

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James Michael McAdoo and Reggie Bullock re learning how to be go-to guys. Their freshmen teammates are adjusting to college. And coach Roy Williams is

waiting for his players to hit some free throws. It's clear 11th-ranked North Carolina has plenty to figure out heading into a demanding five-game stretch.

McAdoo had 19 points and 11 rebounds to help the Tar Heels beat Florida Atlantic 80-56 on Sunday, earning a second win to build some confidence before heading across the country and visiting the nation's top-ranked team in the coming weeks.

Bullock added 16 for the Tar Heels (2-0), who led by double figures throughout the second half before blowing the game open in the final 7 minutes. But UNC - with plenty of new players and returnees in new roles - shot 44 percent from both the field and the foul line in an up-and-down performance.

"I think it's coming along," Bullock said. "It's still people trying to see what we're going to need from them for the season, even if it's offensive rebounding or defensive rebounding or just playing defense or being a spot-up shooter. I think people are still growing into their roles, but as we keep practicing, I believe those wrinkles will just come out."

This was North Carolina's last home game until December in a tough opening month of the schedule. The Tar Heels next travel to Long Beach State on Friday night, then head to Hawaii to face Mississippi State to start the Maui Invitational's tournament rounds. After three games there, North Carolina travels to No. 1 Indiana in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge on Nov. 27.

This game was an opening-round contest in the Maui Invitational, though it is separate from the tournament games.

Everyone knew the Tar Heels would look different after losing NBA first-round draft picks Harrison Barnes, John Henson, Kendall Marshall and Tyler Zeller from last year's team. They've added four freshmen - including a starting point guard - and as well as two upperclassmen who missed some or all of last season with serious knee injuries.

"They're not a great North Carolina team," Florida Atlantic coach Mike Jarvis said. "They're good and they're still North Carolina. They still have a whole lot more weapons than we do. We helped their confidence a little bit today, too. They're going to be good. We're going to be better."

As for McAdoo, the sophomore is expected to do a lot with the departure of all that NBA talent. He's off to a solid start, starting with 26 points and 14 rebounds against Gardner-Webb in the opener followed by an 8-for-17 performance against the Owls (0-1).

"It's definitely been a confidence booster," McAdoo said of the first two games. "Guys had a good game on Friday and today I felt like I played pretty well so it's definitely helping me learn more about myself and what I'm capable of doing."

Among the most pressing concerns for Williams: the Tar Heels missed a bunch of free throws just as they did in the opener two days earlier. After going just 9-for-19 against Gardner-Webb, the Tar Heels missed 11 of their first 15 free throws and finished at 12-for-27 for the game.

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"We've been shooting free throws tremendously in practice, so I told them just to have the guts to step up there and make a shot and quit worrying," Williams said.

Greg Gantt scored 18 points and hit four 3-pointers to lead Florida Atlantic, which shot 28 percent. The rest of the team shot 23 percent (10-for-44) from the floor, while the bigger Tar Heels took a 56-36 rebounding advantage that led to 16 second-chance points and 10 more shot attempts.

North Carolina led 32-24 at halftime despite shooting just 34 percent in the opening 20 minutes, then scored five straight points after the break to push the lead to double figures. The Tar Heels maintained a comfortable lead the rest of the afternoon, though they didn't put the Owls away until back-to-back 3-pointers from Bullock and P.J. Hairston that made it 70-48 with about 6 minutes left.

"If you beat one man, they have a second line of players coming," Gantt said. "They're talented and they're big. It's something we can learn from. We'll watch the film and get better."

Photo Courtesy: Reggie Bullock, UNC Athletics