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SPORTS

North Carolina to advance to Elite 8 after victory over Tech



North Carolina players embrace each other after defeating Texas Tech and advancing to the Elite Eight in the NCAA Division One Women's Soccer Tournament at John Walker Stadium Nov. 19, 2023.

Photo by Jacob Lujan

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By Adam Sierra

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With a single goal, No. 3 North Carolina will advance to the Elite 8 of the NCAA Division 1 Women's Soccer Tournament with its victory over No. 2 Texas Tech on Sunday at the John Walker Soccer Complex.

The lone score presented itself in the 71st minute-after junior forward Bella Sember recorded her third goal of the season sending in a shot to the top right corner of the net just out of reach for Tech's graduate goalkeeper Madison White.

"I thought on that goal, which was particularly good, was the team did stay composed," said Anson Dorrance, North Carolina head soccer coach. "... They developed the ball a bit, and the kid who hit it has one of the best shots on the team."

Snapping the Red Raiders' 14-home-game win streak, the Tar Heels will advance to the fourth round of the tournament where they will face No. 1 BYU, according to the NCAA.

"We're super disappointed. I think the main reason we're disappointed is how well the game plan kind of unfolded and how well the players played and the chances we created are going to be brutal to look at in the off season," said Tom Stone, Tech head soccer coach. "... We gave it all we could give and yeah, some of the plays didn't go our way, but that's also soccer and the sport in general."

Both scoreless heading into halftime, the first half of the match proved to be a physical battle between the two opponents as the Tar Heels outshot the Red Raiders 9-4 with a 5-0 edge in shots on goal.

White closed out the first half recording five saves to keep the Red Raiders in the match.

"That's the best goalkeeper we've ever seen," Dorrance said. "... Before every game, obviously we address the strengths on the other team, but rarely do we address the goalkeeper. Before we played Texas Tech today, we addressed the goalkeeper."

The Tar Heels tallied four more shot attempts coming out of the break that ultimately led to the game winning goal by Sember.

North Carolina's backline — senior defender Maycee Bell, sophomore Emerson Elgin and freshman Savy King — posed to be the reason for the lowest number of shots this season for the Red Raiders as they allowed Tech seven shots with none of them being on goal.

"I think today that they possibly outplayed us. They had seven shots on goal, so that's a pretty high number," White said following the 1-0 loss.

Concluding a historic season with a record of 16-2-5 and an all-time program conference record of 8-0-2, the Red Raiders set a new goal in mind for upcoming years.

"I think we definitely set a new standard," White said. "... I think for upcoming years there is that standard where 'Oh, we want to make the NCAA tournament. No, we want to make the college cup.' It's not just making the tournament. We want to make our way through the tournament."



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