

WEEK THIRTEEN
MERCER at NORTH CAROLINA

Howell, North Carolina roll past Mercer 56-7 in home finale

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. -- Sam Howell and North Carolina didn't have to battle to a frantic, drama-filled finish this time.

No, the Tar Heels took care of Saturday's game by halftime in a performance that their Hall of Fame coach called "exactly what we needed."

Howell threw for three first-half scores to set a single-season record for the most TD throws by a true freshman in Bowl Subdivision history as UNC beat Mercer 56-7 in its home finale.

Howell completed 10 of 13 passes for 152 yards and scores of 66, 4 and 33 yards in a dominating opening half for the Tar Heels (5-6), who led 42-0 by halftime.

"The afternoon and night was exactly what we needed," UNC coach Mack Brown said. "We dominated the game. Our guys were ready to play. They took the game over early. The game was over at halftime, so we got to play basically everybody who was eligible on our team, which helps morale. And we didn't get anybody hurt. So it was the perfect night for us."

Howell now has 32 TD throws on the year to surpass Trevor Lawrence's 30 for eventual national champion Clemson last year as the most by a true freshman in FBS history, according to Sportradar.

Howell's TD total also broke the program's single-season record for any player (30) set by eventual No. 2 overall NFL draft pick Mitch Trubisky in 2016. He didn't play after halftime.

The Tar Heels had seen nine of their first 10 games decided by seven or fewer points, each coming down to the final 80 seconds of regulation or overtime. This time, they scored touchdowns on their first six drives, showing no trouble handling an overmatched Championship Subdivision opponent nor the cold and steady rain much of the way.

"We've been in so many close games this year with teams that we're better than," Howell said. "We've honestly played down to some teams' levels this year and we just need to play to our level every single week."

Tyray Devezin ran for 53 yards for the Bears (4-8), allowing him to crack the 1,000-yard mark for the season. But Mercer had 225 total yards and barely avoided matching its most lopsided loss since relaunching the football program in 2013 after a 72-year hiatus in their final game of the season.

"At the end of the day, we didn't get the result that we wanted tonight or this season," Mercer coach Bobby Lamb said. "But as I told the team, it's about relationships you build. It's about gaining that personal degree. ... We've got a great bunch of kids. They fought their tails off."

THE TAKEAWAY

Mercer: Things started badly and quickly got worse for the Bears, who lost a fumble on the game's first offensive snap to set up a quick UNC touchdown in a fast-developing rout. There was even a damper on the positive news of Devezin hitting 1,000 yards when his milestone-securing 3-yard run that ended with him on the ground in pain with an apparent left-ankle injury to end his day in the third quarter with the Bears trailing 56-0.

UNC: The Tar Heels had to win their final two games for bowl eligibility. They're halfway there.

"We were looking at this as a playoff game," left tackle Charlie Heck said.

EXTRA POINTS

The Tar Heels have matched their win total of the previous two seasons combined. ... UNC said receiver Dazz Newsome was suspended for this one after oversleeping for a practice this week. Brown said he could return next week. ... UNC's Michael Carter ran for 159 yards and three scores, including a 60-yarder on the first offensive snap after halftime. ... Mercer avoided the shutout on Harrison Frost's 2-yard scoring pass to Kareem Rogers with 3:38 left after nearly matching a 56-0 loss at Alabama in 2017 as the program's worst since its relaunch. ... The Bears had 89 first-half yards.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
MERCER	0	0	0	7	7
UNC	21	21	14	0	56

Scoring Summary -----

	MERCER	UNC
FIRST QUARTER		
UNC TD 13:30 Antonio Williams 11 Yd Run (Noah Ruggles Kick)		7
4 plays, 19 yards, 1:17	0	
UNC TD 11:39 Michael Carter 45 Yd Run (Noah Ruggles Kick)		14
2 plays, 57 yards, 0:24	0	
UNC TD 1:46 Dyami Brown 66 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		21
4 plays, 87 yards, 0:59	0	
SECOND QUARTER		
UNC TD 11:46 Jake Bargas 4 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		28
7 plays, 64 yards, 3:02	0	
UNC TD 10:09 Emery Simmons 33 Yd pass from Sam Howell (Noah Ruggles Kick)		35
1 play, 33 yards, 0:07	0	
UNC TD 3:22 Michael Carter 9 Yd Run (Noah Ruggles Kick)		42
10 plays, 79 yards, 3:53	0	
THIRD QUARTER		
UNC TD 14:41 Michael Carter 60 Yd Run (Michael Rubino Kick)		49
1 play, 60 yards, 0:09	0	
UNC TD 2:16 British Brooks 12 Yd Run (Michael Rubino Kick)		56
7 plays, 66 yards, 4:02	0	
FOURTH QUARTER		
MERCER TD 3:38 Kareem Rogers 2 Yd pass from Harrison Frost (Caleb Dowden Kick)	7	56
10 plays, 90 yards, 3:56		

Team Stats	MERCER	UNC
First Downs	14	21
Passes for First	10	8
Rushes for First	2	13
Penalties for First	2	0
Third Down Efficiency	5-17	2-8
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-2	1-1
Total Yards	225	537
Total Plays	71	56
Avg Gain Per Play	3.2	9.6
Net Yards Rushing	64	376
Rushes	35	41
Yards Per Rush	1.8	9.2
Net Yards Passing	161	161
Comp-Att	21-36	11-15
Yards Per Pass	4.5	10.7
Times Sacked	0	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-16
Interceptions	1	0
Punts	8	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	4	6
Penalty Yards	30	50
Fumbles	3	1
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Time of Poss	33:48	26:12

Individual Stats

RUSHING					
MERCER	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Tyray Devezin	20	53	2.7	0	9
Kareem Rogers	6	14	2.3	0	5
Brandon Marshall	5	14	2.8	0	8
Team	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Kaelan Riley	3	-14	-4.7	0	2
NORTH CAROLINA					
	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Michael Carter	9	159	17.7	3	60
Josh Henderson	13	98	7.5	0	35
Antonio Williams	9	65	7.2	1	26
Javonte Williams	6	27	4.5	0	11
Sam Howell	1	17	17.0	0	17
British Brooks	3	10	3.3	1	12

PASSING							
MERCER	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Harrison Frost	5	7	92	13.1	1	1	--
Kaelan Riley	16	28	69	2.5	0	0	--
David Durden	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	--
NORTH CAROLINA							
	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Sam Howell	10	13	152	11.7	3	0	99.4
Vincent Amendola	1	2	9	4.5	0	0	81.7

RECEIVING					
MERCER	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
David Durden	7	69	9.9	0	28
Yahsyn McKee	9	63	7.0	0	26
Steven Peterson	1	13	13.0	0	13
Chris Ellington	2	8	4.0	0	11
Tucker Cannon	1	6	6.0	0	6
Kareem Rogers	1	2	2.0	1	2
NORTH CAROLINA					
	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
Dyami Brown	3	83	27.7	1	66
Emery Simmons	1	33	33.0	1	33
Rontavious Groves	3	24	8.0	0	11
Michael Carter	1	11	11.0	0	11
Kamari Morales	1	9	9.0	0	9
Jake Bargas	1	4	4.0	1	4
Antonio Williams	1	-3	-3.0	0	0