

# Tar Heels Roll Over Florida International, 88-72

## Thompson scores 20 points in UNC's season opener

[box score \(PDF\)](#)

**CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP)** – Deon Thompson scored 20 points to help No. 6 North Carolina spoil Isiah Thomas' college coaching debut and beat Florida International 88-72 on Monday night in the 2K Sports Classic.

Ed Davis added 13 points for the defending national champion Tar Heels (1-0), who had little trouble with the undersized Golden Panthers. North Carolina shot 56 percent and led by double digits much of the way to kick off its centennial season against Thomas, the Hall of Fame player and former NBA coach who took over the long-struggling program in April.

His debut came on the same day his 86-year-old mother, Mary, had open-heart surgery in Chicago. He spent Sunday with her, then arrived in Chapel Hill early Monday for the Golden Panthers' shootaround at the Smith Center. He said before the game that he expected to return to Chicago on Tuesday.

Marvin Roberts had 18 points for the Golden Panthers (0-1), who shot 37 percent. North Carolina led 46-30 at halftime, then pushed the margin to 25 points in the first 5 minutes of the second half to eliminate any chance of a Hollywood-esque story line for Thomas.

Instead, the game offered a glimpse of what remains from the squad that rolled Michigan State in last season's NCAA title game. While four starters are gone - including four-year star Tyler Hansbrough and fellow first-round NBA draft picks Ty Lawson and Wayne Ellington - there's still plenty of talent and, most notably, size on a squad that showed plenty of balance against the Golden Panthers.

Thompson, the top returning scorer from last season, was 7 of 11 from the field and had 10 rebounds, while frontcourtmate Davis added 11 rebounds and four blocked shots. Fifth-year senior Marcus Ginyard chipped in 12 points, showing off the all-around game North Carolina missed while he was sidelined much of last year with a foot injury.

Larry Drew II, the sophomore who has to replace Lawson at point guard, had his moments, too, finishing with seven points, six assists and two turnovers in 21 minutes.

Still, North Carolina looked ragged at times when the game was in hand, committing 26 turnovers to continue what coach Roy Williams said was a consistent theme through the preseason.

FIU made headlines when it hired Thomas, who was coming off a tumultuous stint with the NBA's New York Knicks, to guide a program coming off nine straight losing seasons. The game also had its own mild dose of offseason controversy when FIU initially balked at playing North Carolina in the 2K Sports Classic, saying it had expected Thomas' opener would come at Ohio State instead.

Thomas got a late start onto the court, barely walking out of the visiting tunnel before the national anthem had started. He walked across the court to the bench and was greeted with a handshake and a hug by Williams - who was on the bench as Dean Smith's assistant when Thomas led Indiana past North Carolina for the 1981 NCAA championship in his final game as a college player.

North Carolina offered up its own reminder of the past. The Tar Heels wore throwback uniforms to honor the 1957 national championship team as part of its yearlong celebration of its 100th season, complete with the unusual sight of some red on the waistband of the shorts and the neckline of the jersey.

The Classic benefits Coaches vs. Cancer.

