

Blue vs. Blue: Carolina-Duke Rivalry

BY RISHAB REVANKAR
STAFF WRITER

Yankees vs. Red Sox? Cowboys vs. Redskins? Try again. America's best rivalry is a college affair: Duke vs. UNC Chapel Hill. For the second time this season, North Carolina and Duke renew a celebrated basketball rivalry on March 9 — this time at the Dean Dome.

"It's a dream to have basketball loaded so heavily in the triangle," Duke Women's Basketball Head Coach Joanne McCallie told The Guilfordian during a phone interview. "It's why I have come to Duke. The tradition and the history, you live it."

While the competition from both sides of the rivalry is equally fierce, the two schools have very different backgrounds.

UNC intensely recruits blue-chip players who often skip multiple years of eligibility for the NBA draft.

"Duke recruits players who stay over the years," said senior and Duke fan Lamar Cassell. "So you have to admire how the Blue Devils still remain extremely competitive, breaking in the top 10 year after year."

Speaking of the Devil, Duke has turned up the heat on UNC in the last few decades, blowing out the Tar Heels by more than 20 points on nine occasions since 1988. Come March 9, nine occasions may just become 10.

Blowouts don't make rivalries — the nail-biters and hair-raisers do. Here again, the Blue Devils show their horns, having defeated the Tar Heels in eight of the last 11 games decided by five points or fewer.

Remember Austin Rivers?

The Blue Devils took on a fifth-ranked Tar Heel team during the regular season last year. Up by 11 with five minutes remaining, the Tar Heels looked to be cruising to a sure win.

As if destiny itself interrupted, Duke staged an electrifying comeback, which culminated in Austin Rivers burying "The Shot."

"During the game, we were constantly left behind by UNC's offense," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Biology Kenny Kuo. "But then we made the buzzer shot, and I just couldn't believe my eyes."

The Blue Devils tasted sweet victory again this season at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

"Tonight (Feb. 13), number 8 plays number 30," said junior Duke student Daniel Wood. "Oh wait, those are academic rankings. My mistake. #3 Duke is going to crush an unranked 'Tar Hole' team."

To the delight of Wood and Cameron Crazies, Duke outscored UNC 44-35 in the second half to secure a gritty five-point victory in their first meeting of the year.

Behind the thrill and flair of this rivalry is the enduring, but unmistakable hand of Duke's legendary head coach Mike Krzyzewski.

Many would argue that if basketball is religion, Coach K is nothing short of God.

"We quite literally worship Coach K at Duke," said first-year Duke student Lily Zerihun in an email interview.

"There are a many great coaches out there, but Coach K's character and dedication is unmatched," said Pat Thompson, director of Duke basketball operations. "Duke basketball is like Coach's family."

While it often seems like everyone just loves to hate Duke, an unrivaled coach and fan base alike have propelled Duke into the spotlight of NCAA basketball.

"Cameron Crazies are very much like Coach K in the sense that they're extremely dedicated," said Thompson.

"The intense school spirit gives us a very strong sense of community," said first-year Duke student Lily Huang. "Although I haven't really been into sports, I'm so excited that we beat UNC."

Beat UNC. Heck yes.

BY ANTHONY HARRISON
STAFF WRITER

If you know me, you know me to be a fair, tolerant, balanced, rational man. However, you cannot speak with me about the Carolina-Duke rivalry and expect those qualities.

My hatred of Duke exceeds dislike. You lose my respect if you admit your allegiance to the Blue Devils. I can't even look at certain shades of dark blue without feeling physically bothered.

This disgust sprouted from deep roots. My father, a University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill graduate, steeped me in love for the Tar Heels and hate for the Dookies since I was a child.

I'll admit I'm brainwashed. I think of any Carolina squad as scrappy athletes, while I see Duke players as oafs.

I think of Carolina as the underdog despite our 29 regular-season conference championships, 18 Final Fours, five national titles and our 29-game lead in the rivalry. I think any time you take Duke away from the Cameron Crazies, you have a contest.

And always, I think Duke is overrated in the polls.

Many North Carolinians join in collective hatred for the Devils.

"You aren't supposed to hate in the South, but in North Carolina, basketball is the exception," said senior Traynham Larson. "Hating Duke is the best because their coach looks like a rat and all their players are misplaced Yankees."

Sadly, I cannot keep the blinders on my eyes. The Tar Heels face a difficult match-up to cap a season of rebuilding and sometimes disappointment.

Following an unspectacular start to conference play, Carolina head coach Roy Williams started four guards for the first Duke meeting on Feb. 13. The Heels lost by only 5 points at Duke.

Since, Carolina's four-game streak shows that the four-guard lineup holds potential. The strategic shift and home-court advantage may sway the tide in the Heels' direction on March 9.

"Since going to the smaller lineup, their defensive intensity has picked up and they have much better spacing on offense," said Chapel Hill alumnus Daryl Little. "They have to guard the three-point line and make free-throws. They are called free throws for a reason."

Ironically, Little works as a radiology technician at Duke Medical Center.

According to Guilford alumnus Adam Lucas '98, publisher of Tar Heel Monthly, the atmosphere on Chapel Hill's campus already simmers leading into the rematch.

"It's very charged," Lucas said in an email interview. "There's a lot of talk about the game everywhere, from Franklin Street to classrooms."

Lucas believes the closeness of the two schools intensifies the rivalry.

"There's a little bit of a curiosity factor with them only being eight miles apart," Lucas said. "There's no other example in college basketball of two teams in the same league in such close proximity being so good for such a long period of time."

Since the first matchup on Jan. 24, 1920, great moments defined the rivalry.

When I watched footage of Carolina guard Larry Brown brawling with Duke forward Art Heyman on Feb. 4, 1961, I thought, "Heyman had it coming, fouling like that." When I watched tape of the March 2, 1974 meeting when Carolina scored 8 points in 17 seconds to go into overtime and win the game, it inspired tears of joy.

Last year, when I watched Duke guard Austin Rivers sink the game-winning three at the buzzer at Carolina, my heart sank with the ball. Yet when Carolina stomped Duke at home — scoring 22 points against Duke's 5 in the first minutes of the game — it made that victory sweeter.

But the rivalry delves deeper than athletics, location and kin.

In his book, "To Hate Like This Is to Be Happy Forever," author and Carolina graduate Will Blythe wrote, "(The rivalry) is Ali versus Frazier, the Giants versus the Dodgers, the Red Sox versus the Yankees ... the Democrats versus the Republicans, the Yankees versus the Confederates, Capitalism versus Communism ... the Life Force versus the Death Instinct, Eros versus Thanatos. Is that big enough?"

Blythe hit it on the head. The Carolina-Duke rivalry is not just sports. It is cultish. It is tribal. It is life itself.



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