

Spring training, Spring Break clash — see below

SPORTS FRIDAY

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Wall-to-wall conference title tilts set for Spring Break



THE PITCH

Duke getting more than its due in polls

Someone please take notes for me this weekend on what happens in the rest of the world while my life is engulfed by the greatest rivalry in sports. For those of you who just staggered out Davis Library or a cave, North Carolina and Duke get it on this weekend in the mecca of college basketball that we affectionately call the Dean Dome. The Tar Heels enter Sunday's game as the No. 1 team in the nation while Duke occupies the sixth spot in the latest Associated Press poll. North Carolina deserves to be penciled in as the No. 1 seed in the East Region of the NCAA Tournament before the start of the ACC Tournament — that's even if the unthinkable happens and Bobby Hurley wins his last game in front of his most ardent enemies. Duke is virtually a lock for a No. 2 seed in one of the other regions, even though they can only finish as high as third in league play.

So why bother with this game? The crosstown rivalry, as we all know, extends beyond the game itself. Students, alumni, faculty and fans from the area enjoy belittling each other after a big victory. From that point on, the whole community claims superiority in every aspect of life: academics, night life and drinking prowess. What else is there?

March Madness. All year long the 15-501 rivals have been jockeying for position in the conference and in the national polls. Each team knows that the top spot in the ACC Tournament and the NCAA Tournament eases first- and second-round matchups a bit.

The Blue Devils have been ranked in the top 10 for 41 straight weeks since Jan. 21, 1991. Duke has spent much of its last two seasons as the darlings of the media. People who root against the royal blue also must hate mom, America and apple pie.

After spending five weeks in the top spot, Duke dropped to No. 3 Feb. 8, sporting a 17-3 record. The three losses were against Georgia Tech, Virginia and in overtime against Florida State. Tough losses, but how can you justify ranking a team third in the nation when it is barely third in its conference?

After that gratuitous ranking, Duke won at Clemson and defeated the Yellow Jackets at Cameron Indoor Stadium. But the Cameron Crazies saw their team buckle under the pressure 98-86 to Wake Forest. That was a fourth conference loss, and the Blue Devils were still No. 9 in the nation.

A drop of six spots is at least a little justice. Still, an outside force, something more powerful than wins and losses and common sense, seemed to keep Duke close to the top.

I get the impression that there is a wall at the No. 10 ranking that the Blue Devils just cannot pass below no matter how badly they screw up.

Duke still is riding the respect earned from two consecutive national championships while boasting one of the great guards in college history (though I'll never admit to this). Pollsters also seem to rank Duke as if the seemingly infallible Grant Hill was still in action and not basing their votes on the present.

The whole world seemed to know about UNC's last-second loss to Michigan, but the AP voters quickly forgot about it and counted the loss as if it were a blowout.

UNC started February at No. 4 in the nation and slipped two spots after a loss to Michigan Feb. 3. The Tar Heels slowly climbed their way to the top spot with consistency and strong wins both at home and away. It took the combination of beating Florida State in Tallahassee and the top two teams, Indiana and Kentucky losing in the same week.

In order to gain the amount of respect that Duke is given, the Tar Heels had to win seven straight games. Pollsters take a prove-it-to-me attitude with UNC.

Most voters seem hesitant to rank North Carolina higher. They hear from other writers that the UNC backcourt can't hit the outside jumper. Brian Reese has stepped up and the backcourt has been less hesitant to take the outside shot. And UNC is No. 1.

It stands that way if UNC beats Duke Sunday. If Duke should win, the friendly pollsters will no doubt find a place for Duke ahead of UNC in the polls.

And this is all justifiable, right?

Dateline Charlotte: Tar Heels favored to win ACC tourney

By Warren Hynes
Senior Writer

Next weekend, some of you will be in the hot sun of Florida, some in the comfy confines of your home, others in the warm embrace of your high school honey.

But a few of you, who either know someone or got a darn lucky draw Feb. 17, will be in the Charlotte Coliseum attending the ACC Tournament.

And you will be happy. You will be attending the premier conference tournament in college basketball. That Big Ten or Eleven could have a fine tourney. But don't have one. They have had good tours in the Big East. But this year? Let's get real.

So if you're in Charlotte, you get to see a team that defeated Oklahoma fight for its life in a play-in game. You get to see no less than two NCAA Tournament-bound teams lose in the first round. You get to see fans wearing Carolina blue, navy blue, garnet and gold, orange, and — for the few who are bold enough (and around on Thursday) — Wolfpack red.

There are still regular-season games to be played, so the seedings are not all set. What is known is that Maryland and N.C. State will duel Thursday night at 7:30 for the right to play top seed UNC.

Here's what's not known, a quick prediction of the tourney: The Terrapins are 9-1 outside the conference, having knocked off then-No. 12 Oklahoma Jan. 19 and Louisville.

Dateline Rock Hill, S.C.: Defense key for women's basketball

By Jeff McKinley
Staff Writer

After wrapping up the ACC regular season tied for second place in the conference, the North Carolina women's basketball team heads into this weekend's ACC Tournament focused on reaching the final game for the first time since 1986.

"One of our goals this year was to do better than we did last year, and we've already done that," UNC head coach Sylvia Hatchell said. "Of course we'd like to be ACC champions and to do even better in the NAAs than we did last year. So we have accomplished some of the goals, but a big goal is the ACC championship."

The 18th-ranked Tar Heels (21-5, 11-5 in the ACC) begin their quest for the championship Saturday at 3 p.m. in Rock Hill, S.C., against N.C. State. North Carolina, the tournament's No. 3 seed, split its regular-season series with the Wolfpack, but Hatchell said State is a better team now.

"N.C. State's playing real well right now," Hatchell said. "They're heavy with seniors, and they often start five seniors. They're playing like the seniors should have been playing all year probably."

State finished the regular season with an 8-8 conference mark, 14-12 overall. Hatchell warned not to be deceived by the Wolfpack's record — this team has the ingredients to win.

The key matchup in this game features two of the ACC's top backcourts, UNC's Tonya Sampson and Jill Suddreth against N.C. State's Danyel Parker and Tammy Gibson. Gibson leads the Wolfpack with 20.3 points per game, while Parker adds 16.4 ppg and 4.8 assists per game.

Seminoles overcome Tech, 83-82

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Eleventh-ranked Florida State blew a 15-point lead, then rallied in the final 10 minutes and edged Georgia Tech 83-82 Thursday night behind Bob Sura's 22-point performance.

Sura's two free throws with 16 seconds remaining gave the Seminoles an 83-80 lead.

Malcolm Mackey's dunk with three seconds remaining ended the scoring, the inside shot coming when Travis Best couldn't get off a potential game-tying 3-point shot.

The victory snapped a two-game losing streak for FSU, which finished the regular season 22-8 and clinched second place in this year's conference race with a 12-4 record. Tech fell to 15-10 and 7-8.

FSU used a 15-0 run in which Sam Cassell scored eight points and Sura seven to give the Seminoles a 34-19 lead with 6:14 left in the first half. Tech was held scoreless for just over 6 1/2 minutes.

ville Dec. 28. But inside the ACC, Maryland is 2-13. Matching that intraleague record is the Wolfpack, which has struggled through one of the worst years in the school's history. Enough has been said about this team, and the chapter will be closed Thursday night. North Carolina will take its third win of the year from the Terrapins and will follow that up next Saturday with another win. Its opponent in that game could be either Wake Forest, Virginia or Georgia Tech. The only one of those three to have defeated UNC this year is Wake. That won't happen in Charlotte. Should Duke and Florida State survive their first-round matchups, they will meet in the semifinals next Saturday afternoon. This matchup has been an interesting one: FSU nipped Duke in overtime Jan. 24, but Duke answered with a 98-75 trouncing Feb. 24. And in next Sunday's final, the Tar Heels will wait for the Blue Devils, who will knock off the Seminoles, thanks in part to Grant Hill's return to the lineup. The league title will be North Carolina's this year, and the Tar Heels will nab the top seed in the East Region. It will be the school's 19th-straight invitation to the NAAs.

Should the Tar Heels defeat Duke Sunday and then win the first two games of the ACC Tournament, Dean Smith will have amassed his 768th career win, passing the late Henry Iba for second all-time among Division I coaches. Adolph Rupp (875 wins) is another three to four seasons away.

QUARTERFINALS	SEMIFINALS	FINALS
No. 2 Maryland (11-5)	No. 7 Fla. State (6-10)	No. 3 UNC (11-5)
1 p.m.	4 p.m.	5:45 p.m.
No. 6 M.C. State (8-9)	No. 1 Virginia (13-3)	Monday, March 8
3 p.m.	6 p.m.	
Saturday, March 6	Sunday, March 7	ACC Champs
No. 8 W. Forest (4-12)	Winner of No. 8 vs. 9	
6:30 p.m.	No. 4 Ga. Tech (8-8)	
Today, 7 p.m.	8:30 p.m.	
No. 9 Duke (3-13)	No. 5 Clemson (8-8)	

Suddreth runs the point for North Carolina, dishing out 4.0 apg. Sampson, however, is the scorer. She leads the league with 21.2 ppg and recently earned first-team All-ACC honors for the second consecutive season. Hatchell said the Tar Heels would look to Sampson to shift her game into high gear this weekend.

"I'm going to really challenge Tonya to play her very best that she's ever played in this tournament," Hatchell said. "Tonya leads the league in scoring and steals (3.7 per game) and is at the top in several other categories. Tonya, in my book, should have been (ACC) Player of the Year."

"I'll challenge her to step up, be a leader and really play the best she's ever played in this tournament."

While Sampson leads the Tar Heel scoring attack, defense may be the ultimate factor in whether or not North Carolina can carry off the ACC crown.

Sunday, 1:30 p.m., WTVD 11
Smith Center, Chapel Hill

Backcourt

Bobby Hurley is one of the great point guards in NCAA history. But he has struggled in the Smith Center, averaging 11.7 points, 38-percent shooting, 4.3 assists and 6.7 turnovers per game. Chris Collins (4.9 ppg) fills in at guard as Thomas Hill must replace the injured Grant Hill at forward. It's because of this that UNC gets the nod.

Frontcourt

Without Grant Hill, Duke is not the same up front: You can't replace 18 points and 6.6 rebounds per game. But Thomas Hill, Antonio Lang and Cherokee Parks still form a powerful threesome. But UNC's Eric Montross, George Lynch and Brian Reese are as hot as any front-court trio in the country. Duke has its work cut out for it.

Depth

Duke's lack of depth will keep it out of New Orleans. Marty Clark (7.4 ppg), Erik Meek (3.2), Tony Moore (2.9) and Kenny Blakeney (2.9) are not enough. UNC keeps getting quality play from Henrik Rödl, and he will be pumped for Senior Day. Fellow seniors Scott Cherry, Matt Wenstrom and Travis Stephenson will play.

Coaching

Dean Smith and Mike Krzyzewski have met 31 times. Smith has won 18, Coach K has won 13. But Duke has won nine of the teams' previous 15 meetings. The nod again goes to Krzyzewski for his five straight Final Fours. But let's keep perspective: All that matters is that these two coaches have made giant contributions to the sport.

Intangibles

Don't bring kazoos like that letter in Thursday's DTH recommended: It's against NCAA rules. But this crowd of seniors and Duke-despisers should be up for screaming "Hurley" for two hours, roaring at Montross' dunks, stomping their feet, and, in the end, charging onto the Smith Center court as the Tar Heels take the big "W."

UNC 93, Duke 78

The closing of the ACC season also means time for accolades. Here are this writer's top players:

ACC First Team — Forwards: Rogers, Wake Forest; Douglas Edwards, Florida State. Center: Eric Montross, UNC. Guards: Bobby Hurley, Duke;

Tournaments

Fencing at NCAA Mid Atlantic-South Regionals, March 6-7
Swimming at NCAA Zone Qualifying Meet, March 12-13
Indoor Track at NCAA Tournament, March 12-13

Home

Swimming in Tar Heel Invitational II, March 5, 3 p.m.
Baseball vs. St. Louis, March 6, 1 p.m. and March 7, 4 p.m.; Ball State, March 7, 1 p.m. and March 8, 11 a.m.
Lacrosse vs. Syracuse, March 6, 2 p.m.; Penn St., March 10, 3 p.m.; Loyola, March 13, 2 p.m.
Men's Tennis vs. Furman, March 13, 1 p.m.



DUKE AT UNC

The Lowdown

Sam Cassell, Florida State. ACC Second Team — Forwards: Evers Burns, Maryland; George Lynch, UNC. Center: Sharone Wright, Clemson. Guards: Randolph Childress, Wake Forest; Cory Alexander, Virginia. Player of the Year: Rogers, Wake.

—Compiled by Warren Hynes

UNC led the conference in scoring defense, allowing opponents only 59.8 ppg.

"People see us play, and we're a stop-and-go team on offense," Hatchell said. "But we have won many, many games the past two years on our defense. So we're going to be talking about defense. We're going to be keying on defense because we've won some games this year where we've only scored in the 50s, but our opponent scores less than 50."

"I do think defense will be the key." If the Tar Heels get past their quarterfinal game against State, they will meet the winner of a Saturday game between Maryland (20-6, 11-5) and Florida State (13-13, 6-10) on Sunday. UNC would not face top-seeded Virginia (21-5, 13-3) until the championship game Monday night.

The Tar Heels split the regular-season series with all three of the top-ranked teams. Suddreth said Virginia

may be the favorite, but no one should count the Tar Heels out.

"For us, it's definitely one day at a time," the UNC sophomore said. "But definitely I feel that this year again Virginia is the team to beat."

UVA. would not necessarily be the toughest team for the Tar Heels to match up against, Suddreth said.

"I think State and Maryland are both very tough teams, very physical, and I think Maryland would be a much more physical game than Virginia would be."

Other quarterfinal pairings include Georgia Tech (16-9, 8-8) versus Clemson (16-9, 8-8) meeting and Virginia taking on the winner of Friday's Duke-Wake Forest play-in game. Hatchell said nothing can be taken for granted this year because the league was so well balanced.

"There's really no top or bottom team," she said. "Virginia's at the top, but they've lost more games this year in the conference than they've lost in the last three years. And Duke's at the bottom, but they've beaten Maryland, they've beaten State, they've beaten some of the better teams in the conference."

"I think it's up for grabs and will go to whoever comes in and is focused and can play the best over that three-day period."

Virginia's Heather Burge, a 6-5 senior center, earned this season's ACC Player of the Year award. She was joined on the All-ACC squad by Sampson, Shandy Bryan of Clemson, Jessie Hicks of Maryland and Tia Paschal of Florida State.

The tournament begins Friday at 7 p.m. and concludes with the championship game Monday at 5:45 p.m. The final game will be televised live by Home Team Sports.

Destination Florida? Warren has a favor ...

For those of you who are traipsing about Florida this week, I've got a few favors to ask. They're just small favors — little errands I need some of you to make for me. I'll be glad to pay you back by running to Harris Teeter for you or something when you return.

You see, there are 21 major league baseball teams now holding spring training in Florida (the other seven are in Arizona). The bones are creaking and the arms loosening up as the national pastime wakes up for a new year.

And with every new season come questions that reporters such as myself wish to have answered. I'd love to go down and ask some myself, but, well, I can't.

So please, if you're in the following Florida towns, please stop and ask some questions for me.

Ft. Lauderdale (home of New York Yankees): When does Reggie report to work? Reports say that former slugger Reggie Jackson, the newest inductee into the Hall of Fame, is to be named to a vice president position in the Yankees' front office. This is a move that should have been made long ago. Jackson is a man of action, and he will make an immediate impact on the Bronx Bombers.

Vero Beach (Los Angeles Dodgers): Is Tommy Lasorda still around? If so, what is he doing with this team? The Dodgers simply had too much talent to falter as they did last season. If they do not turn it around this year, Lasorda's largely successful tenure in L.A. must end.

West Palm Beach (Atlanta Braves): Is everybody just preparing for the playoffs? With the pitching staff Bobby Cox has this year, it will take a lot for any team to keep his squad from winning a third straight National League pennant.

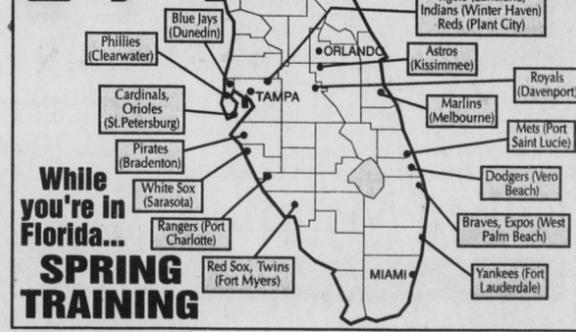
A starting rotation of Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, John Smoltz, Steve Avery and Pete Smith gives the Braves one of the best staffs ever assembled.

Sarasota (Chicago White Sox): Can Bo go? Is he too slow? Or is he really ready for the show? Trying to return to baseball after undergoing a hip replacement is not exactly commonplace. It figures that it would take one of the most extraordinary athletes of the cen-

ture to try it. If Bo Jackson can successfully return to the big leagues it will be a comeback never to be forgotten.

Melbourne (Florida Marlins): Do expansion teams say, "We think this is the year?" or do they just kind of say, "We hope not to lose 100?" The Florida Marlins enter the major leagues this year along with the Colorado Rockies. Both teams will endure the losses a plenty that come with expansion. But

Baseball Goes South



While you're in Florida... **SPRING TRAINING**

both will make money, and, well, does anything else matter in baseball anymore?

These are just a few of the questions, pounding at this baseball-cluttered mind. If you get to any of the towns shown in the accompanying graphic, just bring a pad and pen out onto the field and fire away. I'll owe you one.

And hey — while you're there, enjoy a game.



Warren Hynes
Senior Writer

Wrestlers vie for wide-open league crown

By Pete Simpkinson
Staff Writer

Go figure. The UNC wrestling team claimed the ACC regular season title with a 5-1 mark this year, yet head coach Bill Lam says the pressure to win the conference tournament this weekend falls on three other teams: N.C. State, Clemson and Maryland.

The struggle for the conference title will be waged on the mats of Duke University's Cameron Indoor Stadium all day today and Saturday.

The conference finished the regular-season ACC schedule with wrestlers undefeated at each weight class. Four wrestle for Clemson, three for NCSU, two for Maryland and one for UNC — a cause for concern for Lam.

UNC's strategies for success in the ACC's regular season will not help this weekend, Lam said. "We were able to move some kids (up weight classes) in the dual meets, and we can't do that in the ACC tournament."

North Carolina's probable starting lineup holds a composite record of 174-88 for the season, a notable accomplishment for the current starters. The lineup includes only one senior (Jeff Vasquez), six sophomores and three freshmen.

"I don't know if we actually have the talent to win it," Lam said.

Amateur Wrestling News currently ranks the Tar Heels 25th in the nation. That same magazine ranked UNC sophomore T.J. Jaworsky second nationally at 134 pounds. Jaworsky cruised to a 31-1 mark during the regular season.

Maryland finished 12-2 (4-1 in the ACC). Ranked No. 21 by the Amateur Wrestling News, the Terrapins are riding a four-match win streak. The Terps feature three nationally ranked wrestlers.

Clemson, ranked 20th, finished 13-9-1 (3-2). The Tigers have won three straight matches. Lam awarded Clemson "the best shot of winning it." This year's Tiger squad includes five nationally ranked wrestlers.

The other legitimate contender, N.C. State, finished 12-8 (3-3). Heavyweight Sylvester Terkay, ranked No. 1 nationally, leads the 22nd-ranked Wolfpack.

As for UNC, the team already knows what it needs to win. Lam called freshman Jarred Ezzell's weight class of 126, "one place we're looking for an upset."

Another key matchup comes at sophomore Mark Taylor's division, 158. "It's gonna be an interesting weight class," Lam said.

In addition to performing well in the meet's consolation matches, Lam said, "126 and 142 are key weights for us. We have to win 134 and be in the finals at 158 and 167."

The tournament holds special importance to sophomore Stan Banks, who wrestled many matches this year at 177 but will compete at 167 this weekend. Lam said the tournament would be a walk for Banks at 177, but his best shot for postseason All-America honors comes at 167.

"It's more important for him to be an All-America than ACC champion," Lam said.

Lam has won seven ACC tournaments in his 20 years at UNC. Do not write off for No. 8, Lam said. "We're not the power, but if anybody makes any mistakes, we'll slip in."