



RICKY DANIELS, a former West Brunswick High School basketball star, has had a solid season for the N.C. State Wolfpack.

SPORTING SCENE

Spring Sports Season Ready To Make Splash

If my calculations are correct, as they sometimes are, we still have 10 more days before the official arrival of spring.

Ah, spring. It's best known for rain, blossoming dogwoods, rain, baby birds fighting over regurgitated worms, rain, mosquitoes, rain, the return of tourists and rain.

I hate rain. In the world of sports, rain leads directly to rain-outs, which leads to make-up games, which leads to confusion, which leads to headaches.

Spring doesn't formally arrive until March 20, but for some reason the high school spring sports season begins March 14. I guess they need the head start so they can reschedule all of the rain-outs.

The spring sports season is two hectic months of baseball, softball, boys' tennis, golf and track and field and a partridge in a pear tree. In other words, it is a sports editors' worst nightmare.

If spring has one saving grace, it is baseball. There's nothing like watching a baseball game to soothe the savage beast.

If I were a doctor, I would definitely not be an ear, nose and throat specialist. But I would order all of my patients with heart conditions or high blood pressure to watch baseball.

This would put me in line for the Nobel Peace Prize or whatever award they give doctors who discover medical breakthroughs. Did you know scratching the tip of your tongue and left big toe at the same time cures the hiccups?

But let's get back to baseball. As a child, baseball was my favorite game. I played organized ball from age 8 until age 15. That's 56 years in dog years.

My natural position was second base, where I played almost exclusively throughout my career. Like every other Little League rookie, I made a brief appearance in right field.

But second base was my primary residence. All through Little League and my first year in teen ball, I played second base. I was the Joe Morgan of the neighborhood.

Then, suddenly and without warning, I was moved from second base to third base when I reached the age of 14.

Moving from second to third doesn't sound like much, but in baseball terms it's roughly the equivalent of moving from Orlando to Tokyo.

There's no telling what was going through the mind of Dale Weber, beloved coach of the Middletown Lions, but he thought it was best for the team if I played third base to make room for a younger player at second base.

Third base, for those not familiar with the finer points of baseball, is probably the most dangerous position on the field if you don't count catcher.

The funny thing is they allow the catcher to wear shin guards, a chest protector and face mask. The only thing third basemen get is a glove. Nobody in their right mind enjoys playing third base.

Baseball people call it "the hot corner" because third basemen are often called on to field ground balls that are hit so hard that flames are actually visible with the naked eye.

Based on my experience, I can say without hesitation that most balls hit in the direction of third base get there in a hurry and are typically struck with enough velocity to leave deep bruises unless fielded cleanly.

I won't say I made a lot of errors at third base, but I was pretty good at keeping our left fielder on his toes.

High school baseball season begins Tuesday...if it doesn't rain. I'll bet the third basemen are hoping for cloudy skies.

Doug Rutter
Sports Editor



FORMER TROJAN AT N.C. STATE

Ricky Daniels Sees Brighter Future For Wolfpack Basketball

BY DOUG RUTTER

Ricky Daniels scored just two points in N.C. State's 71-63 win over Wake Forest on Saturday, but those points may have been the most memorable of the day for Wolfpack fans.

The electrifying slam dunk at the start of the second half brought the boisterous Reynolds Coliseum crowd to its feet and sent the noise meter to a frightening, ear-ringing level.

With the Wolfpack leading 34-31, Daniels and teammate Curtis Marshall broke loose on a two-on-one break.

As Marshall dribbled down the left side, Daniels streaked down the right side. A helpless Wake Forest defender moved out on Marshall. The guard flipped the ball toward the basket. Daniels leaped, gathered the rock in his right hand and slammed it home in one fluid motion.

Awesome Baby!

Later on in the Wolfpack locker room, the former West Brunswick High School basketball star relived the alley-oop.

"I thought it was a little high. Curtis really put it up there. I just had to stretch and get it," Daniels chuckled.

Other than the dunk, Saturday's game wasn't spectacular for the two-time Brunswick County high school player of the year. Daniels had two rebounds, one assist and one blocked shot in 17 minutes of work.

But as far as Daniels was concerned, a victory in N.C. State's final home game of the season was far more important than his personal statistics.

It's been a tough year for the Wolfpack (5-11 Atlantic Coast Conference, 11-18 overall), but

Daniels says he feels good about the team's future and is looking forward to his senior year.

The 6-6 forward transferred to State this season after two outstanding years at Anderson (S.C.) Junior College. He has had an immediate impact on the Wolfpack program, averaging 5.8 points, 4.6 rebounds and 2.4 assists per game.

"I could have played a lot better than I did, but I think the season went pretty good for me," Daniels said. "When I first started I was coming off the bench, and I got to start about halfway through the season."

Daniels, who earned all-conference and all-region honors both years at Anderson, said he wasn't surprised that he landed a starting position in his first season at N.C. State.

"I figured I could if I really worked at it, which I did. I just kept working and working and eventually I worked myself in," he said.

Daniels admitted it was a big jump moving from the junior college level to the Atlantic Coast Conference, which is widely regarded as the best basketball conference in the nation.

"I had to get a lot stronger and practice on my shot, releasing at the top of the jump, and just playing tougher defense," Daniels said. "Everybody can score. If you get the ball to the open person they're going to score."

N.C. State Coach Les Robinson has praised Daniels for his versatility on offense and defense. A streaky shooter, Daniels said he tries to help the team in other areas if his shot isn't falling in a particular game.

Daniels, who averaged 31.4 points per game his senior year at West, has bulked up since his

high school days.

College basketball is much more physical than high school ball. "If you get physical with them they'll slack off. You have to dish it out and let them be the one thinking," he said.

Daniels, who led West Brunswick to a 21-6 record his senior year and won two straight conference titles at Anderson, said it's been difficult losing so many games this season.

"It's hard, but eventually we're getting better and better. We could have won a lot more games than we have. There were some smaller teams that came in here that we took too lightly. I know that's what it is because every time we play a team in the ACC we play them pretty well," Daniels said.

"I think we have some pretty good players. I just think we need to recruit a couple big men," he added. "That would help us a lot because right now we only have one big man and we have to go outside to the three-pointer. If that's not falling then it hurts."

Daniels, who is taking a double major in business and communications, looks for better things ahead.

"I expect we're going to have a better season next year. We've been getting better and better. We've let some games slip but we're getting better."

The highlight of the season for Daniels was the Wolfpack's 78-70 win over Florida State on Jan. 16, when he made 8-of-9 field goal attempts and scored a career-high 20 points.

"I was really hot. It was like everything I shot was falling," he said.

SECOND ROUND THURSDAY

West's Frink Fuels State Playoff Win

BY DOUG RUTTER

Derek Frink scored a career-high 24 points Monday to lead West Brunswick to a 78-62 win over Fayetteville Cape Fear in the opening round of the state 3A boys' basketball playoffs.

Jonathan Williams scored 16 points, Timothy Daniels added 12 and Anthony Moody and Eric Johnson had 10 apiece for the Trojans, who snapped a two-game losing streak and improved to 10-15.

West Brunswick plays Eastern Randolph, the top seed from the Mid-Piedmont Conference, in the sectional semifinals Thursday at 8:30 p.m. at Burlington Williams High School.

In Monday night's playoff opener, West Brunswick jumped out to a 19-11 lead over the visiting Colts in the first quarter and built its advantage to 40-21 at halftime.

Cape Fear trimmed the Trojans'

"I thought we played about as well as we could. It was a great win for us."

—Coach Charlie Stevens

lead to less than 10 points in the second half, but West Brunswick held on for its first playoff win in three years.

"I thought we played about as well as we could," West Brunswick Coach Charlie Stevens said. "It was a great win for us."

Stevens praised the play of Frink, a 6-5 sophomore center who had the biggest game of his young career.

Top Guns In First Place

The Top Guns took over first place in the Brunswick County Over 30 Men's Basketball League on Monday with a 60-57 win over Galloways Gang.

Donald Stanley scored a game-high 27 points for the Top Guns (5-1), and Curtis Marshall had 22 for Galloways Gang (4-2).

In Monday night's other game at Supply Elementary School, Mitch Healy scored 24 points as the Wannabes defeated the Has Beens 56-46. Tim Bridgers had 22 points for the Has Beens.

In league play last Monday,

Marshall scored 18 points to lead Galloways Gang to a 61-46 win over Doshier Hospital. Larry Johnson scored 17 points for the hospital.

Also last Monday, the Top Guns picked up a forfeit win over the Mule Riders.

Brunswick County Over 30 Men's League Standings As Of March 8

Team	Wins	Losses
Top Guns	5	1
Mule Riders	4	2
Galloways Gang	4	2
Wannabes	3	2
Has Beens	1	4
Doshier Hospital	0	6

"I thought Derek Frink had an outstanding game. We had several players in double figures, but he got us going real early," Stevens said.

Stevens, a first-year coach who came to Shallotte to rebuild the West Brunswick basketball program, said making the state playoffs and winning a playoff game are steps in the right direction.

"The thing about trying to get a program to the standards that everybody likes is you're going to have some ups and downs," Stevens said. "To get to the point where we want to be you have to win a game like this."

West Brunswick had been struggling prior to Monday night's win. Heading into the playoff game, the Trojans had lost five of their last six games to finish fourth in the Waccamaw Conference.

Jerome Johnson scored 18 points for Cape Fear, which ended the season with a record of 11-15.

Score By Quarters

Cape Fear	11	10	16	25	—62
West Brunswick	19	21	13	25	—78

Cape Fear scoring: Johnson, 18; Fort, 11; McLucas, 10; Edwards, 7; McEachin, 6; Davis, 3; Bulla, 3;

Lane, 2; Outlaw, 2. West Brunswick scoring: Frink, 24; Williams, 16; Daniels, 12; Johnson, 10; Moody, 10; Morgan, 4; Hill, 2.

WACCAMAW CONFERENCE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT BOYS

First Round

- S. Bruns. 36, W. Brunswick 27
- Pender 98, S. Columbus 80
- E. Colum. 62, W. Colum. 56

Semifinals:

- Whiteville 70, S. Brunswick 47
- E. Columbus 86, Pender 53

Finals:

- E. Columbus 55, Whiteville 51

GIRLS

First Round

- E. Columbus 49, Pender 44
- S. Bruns. 39, W. Brunswick 34
- S. Columbus 55, W. Bruns. 36

Semifinals:

- Whiteville 57, S. Columbus 43
- S. Bruns. 30, E. Columbus 26

Finals:

- Whiteville 52, S. Brunswick 25

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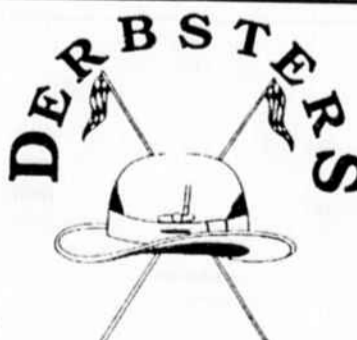
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