

Grant Hill Remembers NCAA Loss

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — When Grant Hill looked at the faces of Duke's seniors after last season's second-round loss in the NCAA tournament to California, he immediately established a goal for this year.

"I saw it on everybody's face, but especially them," Hill said in reference to seniors Bobby Hurley and Thomas Hill, who failed in their bid for a fourth straight trip to the Final Four.

"They were very upset. They were crying," Hill said. "It was real emotional in the locker room. I didn't want to go through that in my last game. I think that and a couple of other things is what is motivating us to do well this year, especially the seniors, wanting to go out on a high note."

Sunday, Hill got his wish. The Blue Devils, the second seed in the Southeast region, made it to its seventh Final Four in nine years by defeating Purdue 69-60 in the regional final. Duke used a packed zone defense to hold All-American Glenn Robinson to a season-low 13 points on 6-22 shooting.

Coach Mike Krzyzewski remembers a similar time when a Duke player cried after an NCAA loss. It was 1985, and the Blue Devils had lost a second-round game to Boston College in the NCAA tournament. Dan Meagher, the tough Canadian, couldn't stop the tears.

"He was really the only senior who played a whole bunch and at the end of that ball game in the locker room, he was just sobbing uncontrollably," Krzyzewski said. "The rest of the team was down, but they weren't feeling like Danny. I'll always remember it."

"He said 'You guys don't understand. I don't have a chance any more. This is it.'" Krzyzewski recalled. "That was one of the key things when we won in '91."

Hill, Antonio Lang and Marty Clark have prolonged their final season to make a return trip to Charlotte, where they lost to Virginia in the semifinals of the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament. The second engagement will take the Blue Devils into the Final Four with a chance for their third title in four seasons. Duke will play Florida on Saturday, followed by Arkansas and Arizona.

Hill was a vital part of the first two, scoring early in the 1991 title game on a memorable dunk against Kansas, then helping a late Duke run complete a big victory over Michigan in 1992. The streak ended last year when the Blue Devils were beaten by California.

With two titles in two tries, Hill suggested that winning so easily might have hurt the team.

"Maybe you take things for granted, us being here our first two years and winning and being successful," he said. "Going through last year was kind of a slap in the face for all of us. We just wanted to get back there and enjoy the moment, and be like (Greg) Koubek and (Clay) Buckley and (Christian) Laettner and those guys, going out in style."

Under the circumstances, Krzyzewski hopes the tracks of Duke's tears have given the current team the drive to win it now instead of saying "Wait 'til next year."

"In crunch time, there can be a little bit more sense of urgency and there's less of a chance of rationalizing," he said. "I think those teams (that win the national championship) think as seniors instead of underclassmen."

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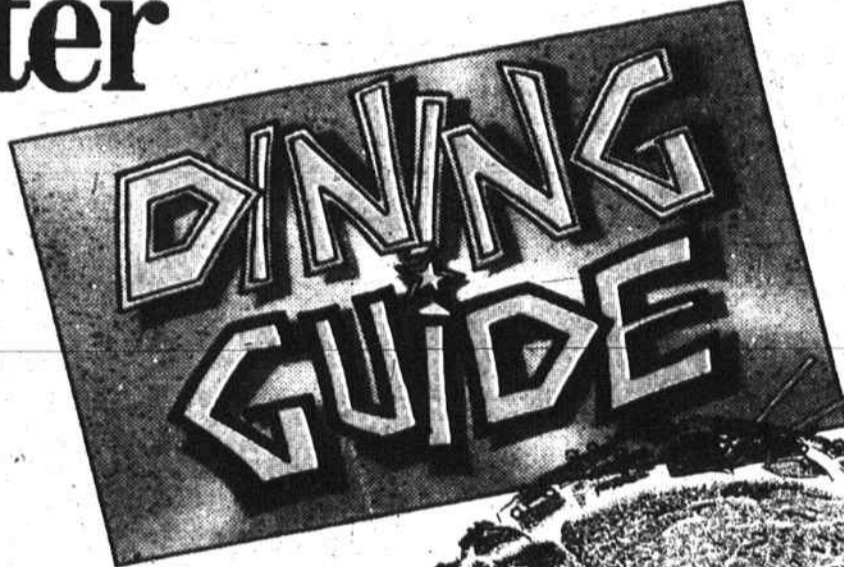
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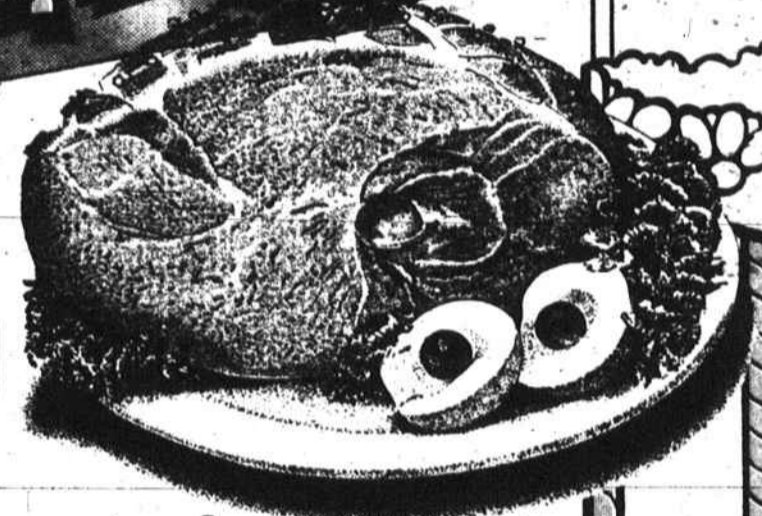
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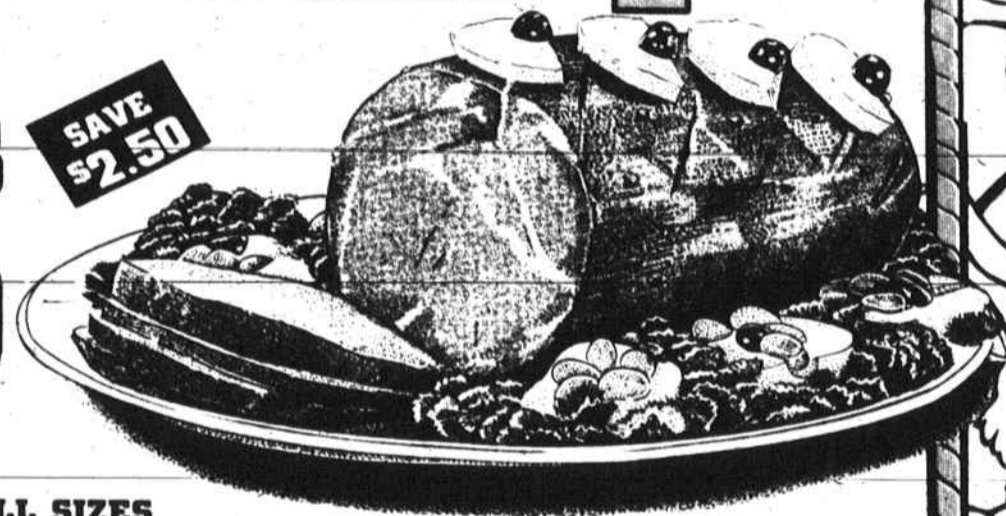


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