

# SPORTS MONDAY

Monday, March 1, 1999

The Daily Tar Heel

## Lacrosse Opens With Pair of Wins

Sophomore attackman Jeff Sonke (left) scored the game-winning goal as the UNC men's lacrosse team squeaked past Butler in Durham. See Page 11.



## INSIDE:

- Gymnastics stays unbeaten. Page 11
- Women's tennis gets split. Page 11
- Visit our Web site at [www.unc.edu/dth](http://www.unc.edu/dth) for more tennis, lacrosse and swimming results.

14



DAVE ALEXANDER  
COMPOUND FRACTURE

## Duke Best in ACC History? Not So Fast

It's a natural debate when it comes to athletics.

In a forum where the object is to be the best, it stands to reason that we want to know who is the best.

That's why there's a tournament for just about every sport in the world, from soccer to billiards (and, new for 1999, the Match Play Championship for golf).

But every so often there's a team or an individual that comes along and takes the fun out of the discussion.

Say, for instance, Michael Jordan.

Or the 1998 New York Yankees.

In those cases, there's just not much to be debated. MJ and the Yanks were clearly head and shoulders above their respective competitors (unless, of course, one has an uncommon appreciation for the pure fundamental genius of Vlade Divac, for whom a strong case could be made).

In these instances, the scope of the discussion expands to all of time.

Is His Airness the greatest basketball player ever? Has there ever been a team as good as last season's Bronx Bombers?

Now that's a discussion worth having, one that could last for hours and raise the ire of fans, purists and historians all at once.

So let's throw this one out just for kicks: Are the 1998-99 Duke Blue Devils the best team ever in ACC history?

Sound ridiculously premature? Don't laugh. Opinions were being submitted just minutes after Duke had capped the first flawless ACC season in 12 years with an 81-61 trouncing of UNC.

"They're a great team, a superb team," UNC forward Ademola Okulaja said. "Probably statistic-wise, they're the best team ever in the ACC. But I think our team last year was better."

There are probably a lot of players who have graced ACC courts and think they played on a team that was better than Duke is this year.

A case could be made for last season's Tar Heels. Likewise for last season's Blue Devils. And so on.

That's the beauty of it. There's absolutely no way to tell, so the debate rages on.

But Duke does have the opportunity to join some pretty elite company before the book is closed on this season.

Should the Blue Devils win the rest of their games (three in the ACC Tournament, six in the Big Dance), they would become the fifth team in league history to win the regular season conference crown, the conference tournament and the national title.

The others: Duke in 1992, UNC in 1982 and 1957 and N.C. State in 1974. Duke's potential 38-1 record would be surpassed, in terms of winning percentage, by only the '57 Tar Heels, who finished 32-0.

But that discussion, for now, is irrelevant. As it stands, the Blue Devils aren't even in a class with those aforementioned teams. Or, for that matter, with the 1997-98 Tar Heels.

For everything they've accomplished so far, what they achieve in the next month will be doubly important.

"We're good, but we're not there yet," Duke forward Chris Carrawell said. "We're a long way off. We won an ACC championship, we're 16-0, but there's a lot more to come."

There better be, or there's simply nothing to debate.

Jordan has six NBA titles to his credit. The Yankees topped their dream season with a four-game sweep of San Diego in the World Series.

What has Duke done except win a few relatively meaningless games?

Let the Devils go 9 for 9 down the stretch.

Then let the debate begin.

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# Tar Heels Reach ACC Final

Third-seeded North Carolina will face No. 4 Clemson tonight in Charlotte for the ACC Tournament title.

By BRIAN MURPHY  
Sports Editor

CHARLOTTE — Sylvia Hatchell doesn't like to play zone defense, and North Carolina's women's basketball coach has complained all year about how the changing game has made zone play necessary.

But after the Tar Heels' 83-70 victory against Virginia in the ACC Tournament semifinals at Independence Arena on Sunday, Hatchell just might be softening her stance.

Watching the Cavaliers (20-8) blister UNC's defense for a 36-17 first-half advantage, thanks in large part to Virginia's inside play, convinced Hatchell that the zone might be the way to go.

The Tar Heels (26-6) responded, closing out the half with a 23-4 run, and headed into the locker room tied at 40.

"I'm starting to like the zone," Hatchell said with a smile after the game. "When we played Virginia at our place, in the second half we played zone and it worked, so I didn't hesitate to go to it."

The change in momentum crushed the Cavs, while UNC, behind senior forward Chanel Wright's 20 second-half points, held off Virginia to earn a spot in tonight's final against Clemson (23-5).

"It will come down to who wants it the most," Hatchell said. "It's always a dogfight when we play Clemson."

The fourth-seeded Tigers knocked off top-seeded Duke 76-71 to advance to their fourth-consecutive ACC Tournament final. UNC has topped Clemson for the last two tourney titles.

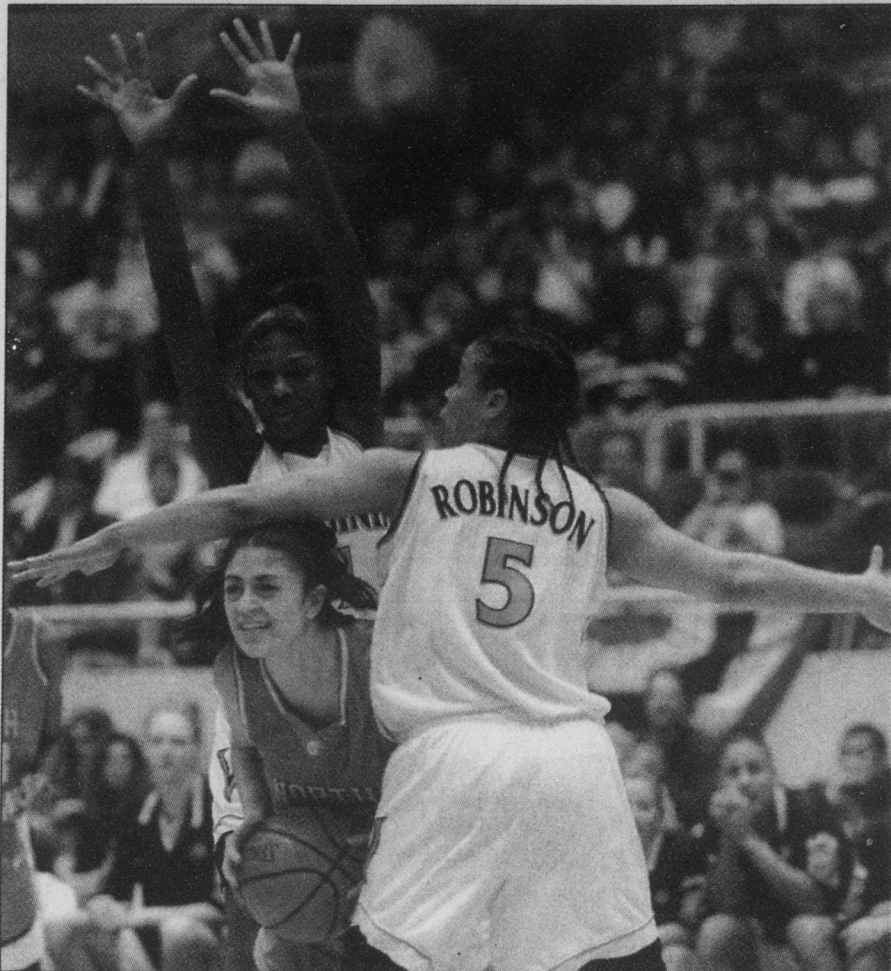
The Tar Heels advanced to the semifinals by topping No. 6 Georgia Tech on Saturday. All five starters scored in double figures, paced by Wright's 18, in the 87-71 win.

Against Virginia, the Tar Heels' balance was not as apparent on the stat sheet. Wright (27 points) and point guard Nikki Teasley, who poured in 19 in the first half and finished with 25, were the only Tar Heels to score more than 11 points.

But UNC did receive contributions from numerous sources. Five-foot-7 reserve guard Jessica Gaspar pulled down a team-high nine rebounds in 36 minutes as Hatchell stuck with a four-

See WOMEN'S BASKETBALL, Page 9

Women's Basketball	
UNC	.....83
Virginia	.....70
Georgia Tech	....71
UNC	.....87



UNC guard Jessica Gaspar (middle) eludes Virginia point guard Renee Robinson and forward Lesley Brown during Sunday's ACC Tournament semifinal game in Charlotte. Gaspar had nine rebounds on the day.

DTH/DAVID SANDLER

## Teasley, Wright Provide Clutch Scoring for UNC

By T. NOLAN HAYES  
Assistant Sports Editor

CHARLOTTE — Last year when the North Carolina women's basketball team needed offense at a key time, it turned to forward Tracy Reid.

Reid was the go-to player, the undisputed leader whom the team could count on to score during tough times.

When Reid graduated, the Tar Heels were left without their security blanket, that one player whom everyone could lean on in hard times.

But that potential negative has become a positive. After playing almost a full season without Reid, UNC now has several players who can convert in

the clutch. No fewer than five Tar Heels can take over a game on a given night and lead the team to victory.

Senior guard/forward Chanel Wright and sophomore point guard Nikki Teasley took their turns to shine on Sunday in the semifinals of the ACC Tournament, combining for 52 points to lead the Tar Heels to a 83-70 comeback win against Virginia.

"These two right here really helped us out," said UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell, who was flanked by Teasley and Wright in the postgame press conference. "They had great games offensively."

Teasley and Wright split up the duty of being the UNC scoring leader.

Teasley got the Tar Heels through a difficult first half, and Wright closed out the Cavaliers with a strong second half.

Both players recorded personal career-highs for scoring in postseason games.

Teasley tallied 19 of her 25 points in the first half, helping UNC rally from a 19-point deficit to tie the score 40-40 at intermission.

Whether sticking the open jump shot or taking defenders off the dribble with her killer crossover and finishing in the paint, Teasley left the Cavaliers in a helpless position.

She provided all of UNC's offense — See LEADERS, Page 9

# Blue Devils' Dominance on Glass Paves Way for Big Win Vs. UNC

Despite playing without Shane Battier, No. 1 Duke controlled the rebounding war against the Tar Heels.

By DAVE ALEXANDER  
Senior Writer

Forgive Jason Capel for his lack of an explanation. It's understandable.

What could he possibly say to explain how North Carolina was so thoroughly embarrassed on the boards against Duke on Saturday night?

"I really don't know," Capel said. "We were banging in there just like they were. They just came up with loose balls, rebounds, long rebounds — everything."

That was a certain shock to the Tar Heels, who, amidst much inconsistency this season, have been consistently dominant on the glass.

UNC entered the contest as the nation's best rebounding team, outboarding its opponents by an average of 10.4 per game. Of the Tar Heels' 10 regulars, six are 6-foot-8 or taller.

Apparently someone forgot to pass the word of UNC's size and rebounding prowess to the top-ranked Blue Devils.

Despite giving away inches at nearly every position on the floor, Duke

resolved to crash the glass with little regard for UNC's height. The strategy paid off as the Tar Heels were outrebounded for the fifth time in 30 games this season, by a 52-36 margin.

"They didn't have the size advantage, but they were using their quickness," UNC point guard Ed Cota said. "They just out-hustled us."

In short, Duke was clearly outsize but undeniably undeterred.

Duke figured to take a beating on the glass, especially with 6-8 power forward Shane Battier and his 4.8 rebounds per game sidelined with a sprained ankle.

Instead the Blue Devils stormed the paint from all over the court, plucking missed shots from the Smith Center stratosphere. In the process, they proved quickness and determination could more than make up for a lack of size.

Center Elton Brand led Duke's board bonanza with 13 rebounds, slightly more than his 9.8-per-game average. His UNC counterpart, Brendan Haywood, the tallest player on the court at 7-feet, had three.

"He's a great rebounder," Haywood said. "I boxed him out as well as I could, but he just got some sometimes."

The Devils also tapped some alternate sources to supplement the interior banging of Brand.

Trajan Langdon swooped in from his perimeter guard spot to pull down six

boards, nearly double his season average. Small forward Chris Carrawell, averaging 4.9 rpg, snagged eight boards.

Then there was dynamic freshman Corey Maggette, who hopped off the bench for a career-high 11 rebounds.

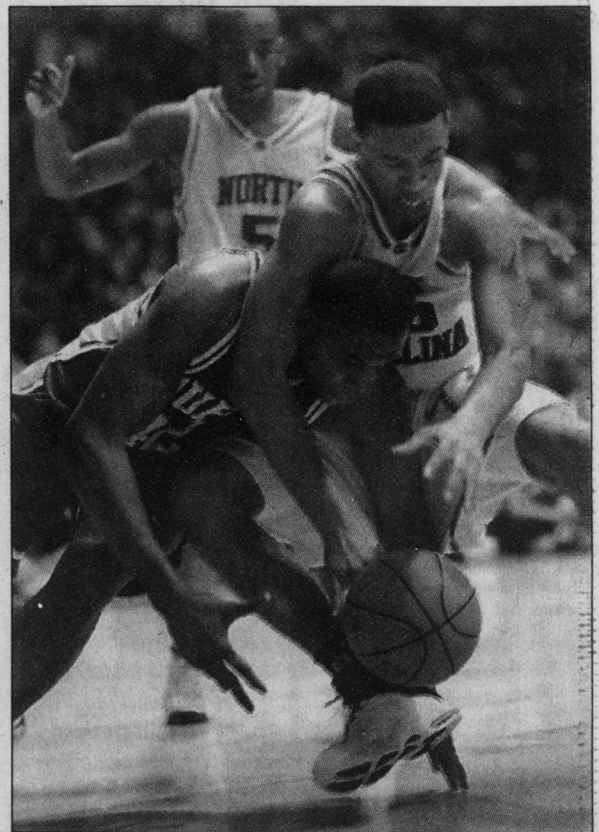
"He came in and played one of his best games of the year," Langdon said. "He was everywhere on the boards. ... He was an unbelievable spark for us."

Maggette's biggest contribution was on the offensive glass, where he grabbed five boards, repeatedly leading to second-chance opportunities for the feisty Devils. In all, Duke tallied 22 offensive rebounds, 15 in the second half when it turned a close contest into a rout.

At the other end there were plenty of boards to be had; UNC shot just 31 percent in the decisive second stanza.

For nearly every Tar Heel shot that clanked off the iron, there was a Blue Devil poised to rip down the rebound. Overall, the Tar Heels were outrebounded 28-16 after the break.

"We got stomped on the boards," UNC coach Bill Guthridge said. "I don't know that we've been outdone that much in a long time. They just wore us down. Seems like every rebound there were three blue shirts and no white shirts there."



Duke's Elton Brand (left) battles with UNC's Jason Capel for a loose ball Saturday. The Blue Devils outrebounded UNC 52-36 on the night.

DTH/SEAN BUSHNER