

The YOUNG and the RESTLESS

Can UNC Upstage the Devils' New Cast? Tune in.

By HUGH PRESSLEY
Senior Writer

During the 1919-20 season, the North Carolina basketball team traveled to Duke and lost a barn-burning 19-18 contest in the first game ever played between the two schools.

Hence, the soap opera began. And after 80 years of don't-touch-that-dial hoops histrionics, the No. 3 Blue Devils (16-2, 7-0 in the ACC) and unranked Tar Heels (13-8, 4-3) star in Episode No. 205 of "The Duke vs. UNC Saga," at 9 p.m. at a Smith Center near you.

This episode — titled "The Young and the Restless" — will have its usual cast of characters: Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski (a regular since his debut in Episode No. 159), UNC coach Bill Guthridge (who has emerged from his supporting role in episodes 120-198), Tar Heel senior Ed Cota and Duke senior Chris Carrawell, to name a few.

And as always, this episode promises to be as exciting as past Duke vs. UNC greats, such as 1995's Episode No. 193 ("The Neverending Story") or No. 199 in 1998, entitled "The Missed Vince Dunk Heard 'Round the World."

Duke has won 16 games in a row and 29 straight ACC regular-season contests. UNC leads the series 121-83, but Duke has won the last three meetings.

"It's a very intense game; it's probably one of the most intense games of the year," said UNC sophomore Jason Capel, whose brother, Jeff, was a regular on the series during the early '90s. "As a little kid, you stay up late to watch the game. It's not just another game."

Rest assured, Episode No. 205 will be anything but a typical ACC contest. "The Young and the Restless" will feature a sweeps-week-type storyline, full of never-before-seen characters and an equally unfamiliar plot.

For Duke (a.k.a. "The Young"), Coach K has the daunting task of taking a cast of three new starters — two (Jason Williams and Carlos Boozer) who are freshmen — into a world where a 16-game winning streak means very little.

But Krzyzewski, albeit very recently, has been through it all before. After losing three starters and another potential starter to the NBA, Duke didn't necessarily have a vote of confidence from national hoops swamies.

And at the beginning of the year, the Devils showed why. Duke stumbled to an 0-2 start, and fans suffered from flashbacks of Pete Gaudet and Duke's woeful 13-18, 1994-95 season.

In the Blue Devils' losses to Stanford and Connecticut, their inexperience was more obvious than a pimple on prom night. Williams had six turnovers each against the Cardinal and Huskies and shot a combined 8-for-32 from the field. The freshman center combo of Boozer and Matt Christensen had nine points in 65 minutes. And junior Nate James, a new starter, went 0-for-8 in the Stanford loss and got blitzed on 'D' for a combined 42 points by Cardinal 2-man David Moseley and Huskies' shooter Albert Mouring.

"You never know how (the young guys) are going to play until you actually coach them," Krzyzewski said. "They've been thrown into it, and there's probably more pressure on them (than last year's young guys). I couldn't have predicted that they would handle the rigors of this level."

But "The Young" have. Since the 0-2 start, the freshmen have played like veterans — Boozer, Williams, James and frosh sixth-man Mike Dunleavy account for 54 percent of the team's scoring. And along with Carrawell and Shane Battier, the new Dookies have helped the Devils go from a team too young to a team too deadly.

Meanwhile, "The Restless" (a.k.a. the Tar

Heels) have gone from a team too deadly to a team that barely escaped its own death. Despite their current two-game win streak, an 8-2 start and a former No. 2 ranking, the Tar Heels shot themselves in the collective heel en route to their almost-unprecedented four-game losing streak in January. Turnovers, lack of defense and all-around inconsistent play crippled the Tar Heels and had them crying "uncle" less than halfway through the conference season.

"We had to do a lot of soul searching; everybody was down," Capel said. "But I think myself, as well as all the other players, just stepped up and said, 'Enough is enough.' We're a lot better team than our record says."

The Tar Heels are looking to prove that tonight. They've got talent — Cota is third in the nation in assists (8.3 per game), Brendan Haywood is the nation's most accurate scorer (71.8 percent), and Joseph Forte leads all freshmen in the ACC in scoring. And they've got momentum, with convincing wins against Georgia Tech and Maryland.

But can they put it all together against Duke? Stranger things have happened in this soap opera. "We definitely want to win this game," Cota said. "We need this game more than they do."

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.

No. 3 Duke at UNC

Time: 9:09 p.m.
Location: Smith Center
Radio: WCHL 1360 AM, 100.7 FM
Television: Raycom/Jefferson Pilot, espn2
Series Record: UNC leads 121-83.

Roll Call

Duke (16-2, 7-0 ACC)	PPG	RPG	APG
PG Jason Williams	14.9	4.6	5.4
SG Nate James	10.4	5.1	2.0
SF Chris Carrawell	17.7	6.2	3.3
PF Shane Battier	15.5	5.9	2.6
C Carlos Boozer	12.6	6.1	1.2

Blue Devil Bench

SG Mike Dunleavy	10.1	4.3	1.9
PF Nick Horvath	3.4	1.9	0.3
C Matt Christensen	2.1	2.1	0.2

UNC (13-8, 4-3 ACC)

UNC (13-8, 4-3 ACC)	PPG	RPG	APG
PG Ed Cota	10.2	3.5	8.5
SG Joseph Forte	15.7	5.5	2.9
SF Jason Capel	12.8	6.6	2.2
PF Kris Lang	8.4	4.2	0.4
C Brendan Haywood	13.3	6.6	0.8

Tar Heel Bench

PF Julius Peppers	3.9	3.8	0.4
SG Max Owens	10.3	1.9	1.0
PG Jonathan Holmes	0.3	0.2	1.1

The Main Characters

Point guard: Cota is a four-year starter. Williams is a freshman. But Williams makes up for much of that gap in experience with superior quickness. With no capable backup, Cota will be forced to log close to 40 minutes against Duke's pressure defense. How he holds up will determine whether the Tar Heels succeed.
Edge: UNC

Shooting guard: Forte, the Tar Heels' leading scorer, will be guarded not by James, but by Carrawell, a defensive weapon. James is solid if not spectacular. He will contribute solid minutes and guard Capel, but the marquee matchup of the game is Carrawell on Forte. The freshman will have to score if the Tar Heels are to win.
Edge: UNC

Small forward: Capel has emerged as UNC's leader, and when he plays well the Tar Heels usually win. But he has had trouble in some of the team's losses, notably against Cincinnati, Michigan State and Indiana. Carrawell is the Blue Devils' best player. He can score, defend at any position and run the point. Forte will have a tough time getting points on him, and Capel will have a tough time stopping him.
Edge: Duke

Power forward: When healthy, Lang can be effective. But he has had trouble staying healthy and as recently as the Maryland game, he needed an IV at halftime. Battier, known by many as someone who only draws charges, has become an all-around player for Duke. He can shoot the 3, defend and provide leadership for the young Blue Devils. If Lang can keep Battier honest and away from Haywood, UNC could have success down low.
Edge: Duke

Center: Haywood, a lightning rod for criticism at the beginning of the season, has emerged in the new year. He played a dominant second half against Georgia Tech and led the Tar Heels in scoring against Maryland. UNC's switch to the point zone has helped Haywood with his endurance and rebounding. Boozer broke a bone in his foot in the summer but has emerged as a force during his freshman year.
Edge: UNC

Bench: Neither team can be considered deep. Duke sixth man Dunleavy plays as much as a starter, averaging more than 25 minutes a game. Horvath and Christensen see less than 10 minutes a game but provide depth in case of foul trouble. Owens and Peppers are the only two Tar Heels who play significant minutes. If Cota needs a rest, Holmes or Terrence Newby will see brief action.
Edge: Even

The Plot

One look at the records and the rankings, and this game appears to be one of the few mismatches in series history. But on paper, the Tar Heels seem to be comparable to the third-ranked Blue Devils, although Duke's edges at power forward and small forward are greater than the slim Tar Heel advantages at center and the two guard positions. With as much hype as this rivalry brings, both teams will come ready to play. UNC is playing its best ball since the Maui Invitational and has regained its confidence. The Blue Devils never lack confidence and are legitimate contenders for the national title. Expect another classic.

The Resolution

Call it a hunch. But the Tar Heels will find enough points to hang with Duke early, they will gain some confidence and a rowdy Smith Center crowd will bring them home.

UNC 77, Duke 74

COMPILED BY BRIAN MURPHY

MIDSEASON REPORT

Kris Lang

Strengths: When Lang's hook shot is on, it's unstoppable. That gives the Tar Heels another legitimate threat in the post to complement Brendan Haywood. Lang's big frame also makes him a key rebounder for the Tar Heels.

Weaknesses: The mystery illness that has plagued Lang since the fall has left him unable to maintain the stamina he had in his freshman year. That illness, a stomach virus and shin splints have caused his body weight, his endurance, and hence, his minutes, to fluctuate throughout the season.

Outlook: As Lang gets closer to a clean bill of health, his rock-solid hook and prowess on the glass will become vital weapons for the Tar Heels to have on a regular basis.

Best/Worst Games	FG	FT	REB	TO	BLK	PTS
Best: at Wake Forest	6-9	2-2	11	4	1	14
Worst: at Virginia	2-8	0-0	2	3	1	4

Strengths: Cota has been forced to play an enormous number of minutes and has handled it well. He continues to rack up assists, passing Phil Ford and Kenny Smith to become UNC's all-time assist leader. Cota rebounds well for a guard and is shooting 48 percent from 3-point range.

Weaknesses: Cota is a defensive liability, part of the reason the Tar Heels are playing so much zone. Although he has taken an offensive initiative in some games, he is still reluctant to take many shots. Cota is the lone senior starter but has deferred much of the leadership role on the team to younger players.

Outlook: The team is still Cota's team. He's not going anywhere. He will continue to run the offense with precision.

Best/Worst Games	FG	FT	REB	A	TO	PTS
Best: N.C. State	8-8	7-9	3	4	6	23
Worst: Louisville	2-7	2-2	2	9	7	6

Ed Cota

Brendan Haywood

Strengths: Haywood swears his effort now is the same as it was earlier in the season, but his numbers say otherwise. The 7-foot junior has played like one of the nation's best big men recently, averaging 17.8 points and 9.0 boards in his last four games.

Weaknesses: Haywood's biggest problem might be that he can't do things himself. He needs his teammates to really work at getting him the ball, and he sometimes gets lost in games when they forget about him. His conditioning could also be much better — his right fist spends too much time in the air.

Outlook: When he's working hard for position and his teammates are looking for him, Haywood is unstoppable (71.8 percent FG). His recent surge shows that UNC can now afford to count on him in big games.

Best/Worst Games	FG	FT	REB	TO	BLK	PTS
Best: Maryland	7-9	10-11	7	1	2	24
Worst: Michigan State	2-3	0-2	1	0	2	4

Strengths: One thing about Forte: He's as smooth as any freshman ever to play for the Tar Heels. His medium-range jumper makes him a constant threat to score because he's that rare player in college hoops today who doesn't have to dunk or shoot 3-pointers to succeed.

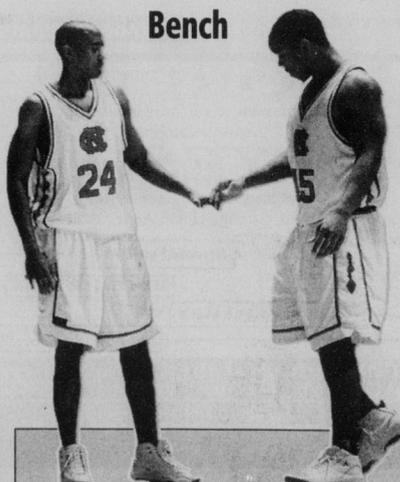
Weaknesses: Forte has few. He scores without seeming like a ball hog, important for any freshman trying not to tick off his teammates. He will need to get stronger, however, to help him fend off opponents who try to bump and hold him away from the ball.

Outlook: The future is bright. Forte should have all the minutes he can play until he leaves Chapel Hill. He's also the best perimeter defender on the team (of the guards who play significant minutes) and should only improve in that area.

Best/Worst Games	FG	3FG	REB	A	TO	PTS
Best: at Virginia	11-16	2-5	11	5	4	27
Worst: at Wake Forest	1-10	0-2	7	1	4	8

Joseph Forte

Bench



his toughness inside has definitely filled a need. With the injury to Brian Bersticker, Peppers is now a necessity. Even if Bersticker comes back, Peppers has earned minutes in Bill Guthridge's rotation.

Max Owens (above left): As a starter, Owens provided the team with another capable scorer and defender. But restricted to the bench, he can provide only a brief spark. His demotion has been one of the most baffling decisions Guthridge has made all season. Owens has proven he can shoot, something the Tar Heels could use. With Joseph Forte entrenched at shooting guard, Owens' future is up in the air. He can play small forward as well, but it seems as if an injury is the only way Owens will make it back to seeing significant minutes.

Bill Guthridge (second from left): With UNC's slide, the critics came out of hiding and began to slam the coach with regularity. Although some moves — Owens' benching — can be questioned, Guthridge has done some good things with a team that is not as talented as most thought. UNC lacks foot speed, quickness and true penetrators, so Guthridge shifted defenses and the Tar Heels have played the matchup zone well. He must also get some of the credit for Brendan Haywood's improvement. As a loyal employee for many years, Guthridge will decide when it is time to stop coaching. But he seems to be enjoying himself and the challenges presented by coaching, so expect him to finish out his original five-year contract.

