

Atkinson layup wins UNC survives physical battle thriller for Tar Heels

Sophomore's shot ends 'ugly' game

BY CHRIS GILFILLAN
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

RALEIGH — Rivalries intrinsically yield the best matchups, even when on paper the teams shouldn't necessarily be close.

That rivalry, in and of itself, was the difference for the La'Tangela Atkinson, who eeked in an inbound-pass jump shot with 3.9 seconds left on the clock, after posting an altogether subpar night.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

UNC beat N.C. State, 58-57, at Reynolds Coliseum, in its most intense game this season.

"I wasn't playing like La'Tangela," she said about her performance before the shot. "I found the open shot, and I lived through the shot."

After a muffed field goal attempt by UNC's Ivory Latta with little time left in the game and her team down 56-57, a 5-foot-5-inch red blur took down a missed field goal and attempted to make a writhing timeout with less than five seconds left in the game.

Instead, N.C. State guard Kendra Bell dropped to the floor and had a traveling called on her.

This set up an inbound pass play from Leah Metcalf to Atkinson, who kissed the final shot off the backboard and into the goal.

Ironically, Atkinson overwhelmingly led the Tar Heels in turnovers in the game, though she wasn't the only one playing comparatively poorly.

As a team, the Tar Heels (13-1, 3-0 in the ACC) had their worst field-goal percentage since the beginning of the season. UNC also scored the fewest points in a victory since a 2000 ACC Tournament win against Clemson.

The Tar Heels were the sixth-best scoring offense in the nation coming into the game.

"It was a ugly win, but it was a win," said UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell. "The good thing is we played bad and still won."

The difference should have come first in scoring, but poor shot selection forced the Tar Heels to rely on their backup strength: rebounding. And when the Wolfpack (8-8, 0-

3) gained some momentum off a few late second chances, it linked together a 9-2 run. The streak ended with a Kaayla Chones jumper over Camille Little, who scored 20 points in the game.

Chones finished with game-high 12 rebounds and 19 points.

She had averaged 4.9 rebounds per game entering the game.

After the game, Chones called the Tar Heels a second-chance team because of their reliance on the rebound, and the numbers justified her statement.

The Tar Heels had 16 second-chance points during the game, while State only posted nine.

But that field goal over Little with 4:34 left was the last shot the Wolfpack would hit from the field. State was up 55-49 at the time.

But just before the Wolfpack's run, Candace Sutton had secured herself seventh place all-time among ACC blocks leaders, and she kept it up.

The subsequent minutes were all UNC, with two blocks and two steals on the Pack's next five possessions. Little had a steal and a block. Sutton tacked on another block.

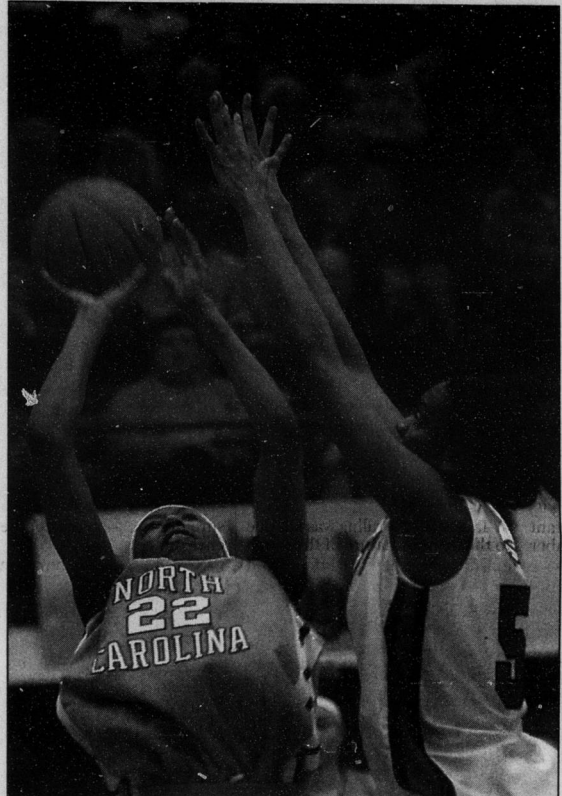
The Pack had made it that far against a team they did not match up with at all, and with 31 seconds left they defied the odds again as Nanna Rivers, a 47-percent free-throw shooter, went to the line for two shots and tagged them both.

"It was a disappointing loss for us," Rivers said. "But there's not much negative that happened in the game."

The game finished with 17 lead changes and seven ties. The game ended in a one-possession game on which the Tar Heels ended up on the right side.

"Wow. Five seconds," reflected State coach Kay Yow. "What a difference five seconds makes."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.



DTH/GARRETT HALL
UNC sophomore La'Tangela Atkinson (22) made up for early struggles when she knocked home the game-winning shot with 3.9 seconds left.

BY DANIEL BLANK
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

RALEIGH — As hard as she tried, North Carolina's freshman point guard Ivory Latta couldn't fight back the tears.

Latta had just smacked the back of her head against the hardwood of Reynolds Coliseum after drawing an offensive foul against N.C. State's Nanna Rivers.

But under no circumstances was Latta going to leave a game that had turned into a State-UNC slugfest with four minutes left on the clock. "(La'Tangela Atkinson) was like, 'Look, you gotta suck it up — we need you out there,' so I did," Latta said.

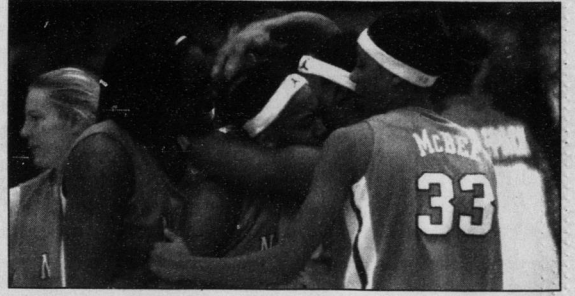
The final, tear-jerking offensive foul came in the middle of a one-minute spurt in which Latta drilled a 3-pointer from the right side and drove the ball for a coast-to-coast layup to draw the Tar Heels within one.

UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell knew the matchup would be an intense, physical struggle, and in pre-game practices, she preached the importance of rebounding to her team.

The Tar Heels won the game on the strength of their offensive rebounding, outscoring the Wolfpack 16-9 on second-chance opportunities.

But State kept the game close by battling UNC to a near stalemate on the boards.

"Coming into the game, we had 'box out' on our forehead," Rivers



DTH/GARRETT HALL
North Carolina players mob La'Tangela Atkinson (center) after her shot sealed their last-second, 58-57 victory against N.C. State on Thursday.

said. "That's what we had to do. They go after the boards all game."

It was this inability to seal out State's inside players that nearly cost the Tar Heels the game.

Wolfpack center Kaayla Chones — who grabbed a game-high 12 rebounds — connected on a 3-point play after UNC twice failed to gather a State miss.

The play triggered a 9-2 Pack run that pushed them to a six-point lead.

But after Hatchell called time to calm her players and quiet the crowd, Latta responded with her string of clutch plays to make the score 55-54, State.

"It was sort of like two heavyweights slugging it out," said Wolfpack coach Kay Yow. "They were getting their punch in, we were getting our punch in."

The trend of contesting each and every rebound continued until nine seconds were left on the clock.

With that, Latta took a desperation leaper in the lane that rolled off the rim. A cluster of arms and legs subsequently converged on the ball.

State's Kendra Bell grabbed the ball, but amidst the chaos, she fell and was whistled for traveling.

On the ensuing in-bounds play, Leah Metcalf found a wide-open Atkinson on the right box for the game-winning layup.

"When I caught the ball I was like, 'I gotta make this shot, the game is on me.' And when I shot it, we scored," said Atkinson with the tired pause of one who had survived a forty-minute dogfight. "We won."

Contact the Sports Desk at sports@unc.edu.

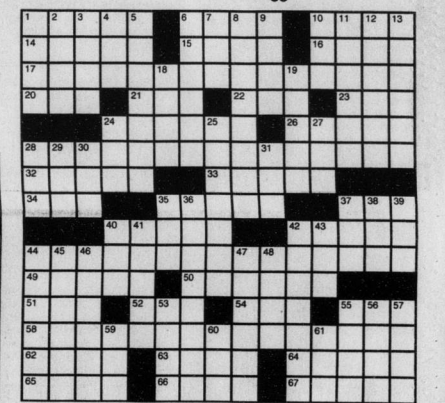
THE Daily Crossword

By Alan P. Olschwang

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- ACROSS**
- 1 Sowing needs
 - 6 CSA soldiers
 - 10 Martial —
 - 14 Jostle
 - 15 List-ending abbr.
 - 16 Gilpin of "Frasier"
 - 17 Draw
 - 20 Soak up some rays
 - 21 Exclamation of discovery
 - 22 New Zealand parrot
 - 23 "The ___ Also Rises"
 - 24 Obliterated
 - 26 "Speedy Gonzales" singer Pat
 - 28 Draw
 - 32 Actress Black
 - 33 Lorna of literature
 - 34 Rhea's cousin
 - 35 Rhone feeder
 - 37 ___ Khan IV
 - 40 Introduction
 - 42 Tennessee tackle
 - 44 Draw
 - 49 Chocolate substitute
 - 50 Expresses contempt
 - 51 Cloak-and-dagger grp.
 - 52 Fella
 - 54 Anatomical duct
 - 55 Make a lap
 - 58 Draw
 - 62 1996 election loser
- DOWN**
- 1 Splinter group
 - 2 Cinders of comics
 - 3 Black, poetically
 - 4 Spanish two
 - 5 Administer an oath to
 - 6 Discuss again
 - 7 Nice summer
 - 8 Clandestine
 - 9 Slide sideways
 - 10 Suitable
 - 11 Sound judgment
 - 12 Trinity
 - 13 Commandment breaker
 - 18 One of those things
 - 19 Itzhak of Israel

- 24 Flock member
- 25 Native to a particular region
- 27 Five before six
- 28 ___ out a living
- 29 '60s war zone
- 30 Actress Joanne
- 31 Sadness
- 35 Quadrennially prominent grp.
- 36 Puts off
- 37 Downed a sub
- 38 Heating fuel
- 39 Social insect
- 40 In favor of
- 41 Synagogue leader
- 42 Sawbuck
- 43 Apr. addressee
- 44 Acquiesce
- 45 Pants patcher
- 46 Paths
- 47 Works of fiction
- 48 Musical syllables
- 53 Shoshones
- 55 Break suddenly
- 56 ___ of Dogs
- 57 Hardy heroine
- 59 Average grade
- 60 King of France
- 61 Eggs



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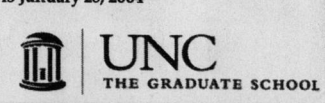
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