

Tar Heels take down top-ranked Duke

BY BRANDON PARKER
SENIOR WRITER

Less than five minutes into Monday's contest between No. 12 North Carolina and No. 1 Duke, 5-foot-6-inch UNC guard Ivory Latta swooped into the lane for a one-handed lay-up attempt, only to have her shot denied by 6-foot-7 inch Blue Devil center Allison Bales.

But Latta proved to be unfazed by the block, as she emerged from the crowd in the paint nodding her head and clapping her hands.

Just after the 17-minute mark in the first half, Latta made a similar drive into a forest of Duke players, one of whom was Bales. This time the sophomore double-clutched and powered in a lay-up, drawing a foul.

In the Tar Heels' last 19 games against a No. 1-ranked team and in their previous 12 encounters with Duke, UNC had been denied. But the Tar Heels used an intrepid attitude similar to Latta's to exorcise the past and knock off the Blue Devils by a score of 56-51 in the Smith Center.

"It's been four years, and for us to beat the number one team and it be Duke, it's just a double victory for me," said UNC senior Nikita Bell.

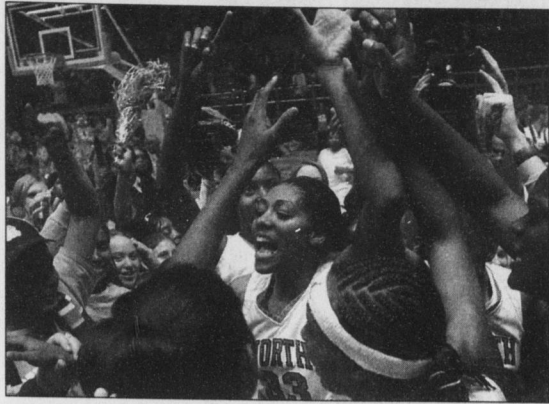
The contest was not a pretty one, as both teams shot under 30 percent from the field and had 44 combined turnovers compared to just 14 total assists for the game. UNC needed a 16-1 run at the end of the first half just to make the score 26-13 in its favor at the break.

But it was this scoring streak and UNC's ability to match Duke shot for shot down the stretch that allowed the Tar Heels to pull out the victory.

"Every game that we've had this year, we've jumped out to a pretty good lead, and then we relaxed, and we lost a couple of those games," said UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell. "So we were just trying to stay focused, and the kids were just ready to play."

UNC (15-3, 3-2 in the ACC) played suffocating defense on Duke (18-2, 4-1), as it held star forward Monique Currie to just two first-half points and had 18 steals — many of which turned into breakaway lay-ins.

"Coach stressed how we needed



North Carolina forward Kenya McBee celebrates following UNC's victory against Duke Monday. The Tar Heel defense held Duke to only 51 points.

to get in the lane, deny, play intense, and that's all I was focused on, just being intense," said Bell, who had the responsibility of shadowing Currie for most of the game.

But Currie woke up in the second half to score 22 of her game-high 24 points, and the Blue Devils gradually cut UNC's 15-point lead down to just two with 1:42 remaining.

Latta's two free throws gave the Tar Heels a 55-51 lead with 16 seconds remaining before Currie was fouled in the backcourt by Bell.

However, Currie, who was 8-for-8 at the line to that point, could not find the bottom of the net on either of her attempts. And after UNC's La'Tangela Atkinson sunk one out of two from the charity stripe with 10 seconds left, the game was out of reach for the Blue Devils.

Despite the historic loss, Duke coach Gail Goestenkers still found some solace in her team's effort.

"We're going to learn a lot from this game," she said. "To have played the game we played and still have an opportunity to win is a sign of good things that could have been."

But as the buzzer sounded and the scoreboard showed that the Tar Heels had defeated Duke for the first time in five years, it was the UNC players and fans who were rushing the court and jumping in jubilation.

And while Hatchell was proud of her team's accomplishment, she was careful not to exaggerate the magnitude of such a win.

"I enjoy playing (Duke) and I

don't like to lose, and it's a great rivalry with a great team," Hatchell said. "This is a great victory for us, but it's not life or death."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

UNC 56, Duke 51. Box score table showing statistics for Duke, North Carolina, and game totals.

Defense reappears for UNC

BY JACOB KARABELL
SENIOR WRITER

After North Carolina fell to Maryland 92-77 on Jan. 9, UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said she was late to the press room because she was looking for someone to play defense or rebound for her team.

Apparently, she discovered that Monday.

The Tar Heels held Duke to its lowest point total of the season, 51, on 14-of-60 shooting. They also outrebounded the Blue Devils — a team that averaged 11.3 more rebounds a game than its opponents heading into the contest at the Smith Center.

"I give all the credit in the world to their defense," said Duke coach Gail Goestenkers. "They did a great job. It was the most pressure we've seen all year, and their traps were very effective."

That pressure and forceful defense allowed the Tar Heels to gain control of the game late in the first half. With both teams severely struggling to convert in a half-court offense, it was the North Carolina defense that created fast-break opportunities — and Hatchell's team converted.

With the Tar Heels already having opened up a 17-12 lead with less than three minutes to play in the opening frame, consecutive steals by Nikita Bell, La'Tangela Atkinson and Camille Little helped push the margin to 10. The Blue Devils ended the half with just 13 points, while the Tar Heels' 16-1 run before the end of the half left UNC with 26 points entering the locker room.

"When they get their defense set, it's hard to get shots in there with (center) Alison (Bales)," Hatchell said. "We were trying to mix it up some, and I really felt like if we could get our transition game going, whether it be off turnovers — we got some of that — or off our fast break in general, that that would play into our favor."

The play of Duke star Monique Currie also worked in favor of the Tar Heels in the first half. Currie, a national player of the year candi-

date, scored just two points in the first half on 1-for-6 shooting.

"I guess we didn't stay poised, but that's what we were trying to do," Currie said. "We were trying to take care of things, not get caught up in their transition, just try to slow things down and run our stuff."

Currie did bring the Blue Devils back almost single-handedly in the second half, finishing with a game-high 24 points.

None, however, came after the 1:42 mark, as the junior missed a pull-up jumper that would have tied the game at 53. She also missed two free throws that would have cut the UNC lead to two with 15 seconds remaining, helping to seal the Tar Heels' upset.

"I just wanted to step it up a whole 'nother level and just let it all hang loose," said UNC senior Nikita Bell, who accumulated five steals in the game. "(Hatchell) gave us that responsibility — always be intense — and I try to do my job."

For the Tar Heels, that job now becomes building on Monday's

"I give all the credit to (UNC's) defense. ... It was the most pressure we've seen all year."

GAIL GOESTENKORS, DUKE COACH

UNC could still live up to the media's preseason expectation of a conference championship — if Hatchell can keep tabs on the defense and rebounding that emerged against Duke, that is.

"We've had a lot of tough games, and I think we just learned from all the experiences that we had," Hatchell said. "Our kids just wanted it (Monday). We played with a lot of heart."

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