



This Dedmon shot helped Heels nip State, 65-63.



Previs drives towards basket against Duke.

Photos by
John Gellman

ACC Tournament: the second season

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Carolina's coaches have been around the ACC tournament too long to consider today's opening game with Clemson a setup.

To refresh their memories, last year's tournament in Charlotte is a typical example.

Eighth-seeded Clemson held on the ball patiently and almost rattled top-seeded South Carolina out of the tourney in the first round. The Gamecocks managed to win, 34-33.

And in the second game of that surprising Thursday afternoon, North Carolina lost 95-93 to seventh-seeded Virginia, a team "that I believe we took too lightly," according to Dean Smith.

The tournament's economic advantages outweigh all of its other absurdities, and it will remain as long as basketball teams need money.

The ACC and Southern conferences are the only leagues in the country that pick their NCAA representatives through tournament play and Davidson, tops in the Southern year after year, has been bumped in the tournament four times since 1964.

The Big Eight has a tournament during Christmas, but that keeps their teams from travelling around the country in holiday classics and cuts down prestige.

"It's still the wrong way to pick a champion," says South Carolina coach Frank McGuire, whose Gamecocks were beaten by third-seeded N.C. State in last year's finals, "but I guess we're all grateful for it each year."

After the Carolina-Clemson game this afternoon in Greensboro at 1:30 USC meets Maryland at 3:30, Duke plays State at 7 p.m. and Wake Forest squares off with Virginia at 9 p.m.

Provided UNC beats Clemson, the Heels meet the winner of the Deacon-Cavalier game Friday night at 7 p.m., and the other two winners clash at 9 p.m.

The final game will be held Saturday night at 8:40.

Eleven of 17 regular season champions have gone on to win tournaments, with Carolina winning in 1957, 1967, 1968 and 1969. The Tar Heels are the only team to win three straight tourney titles and three straight Eastern Regionals.

State has the best tournament record over 17 years, winning 25, losing 11, and winning the title six times. Duke has made the finals nine times, but lost four final games. The Devils' overall record is 28-13.

Carolina is third at 21-12, and Wake Forest has a 21-15 record. The Tar Heels were on probation in 1961 after winning the regular season and could not participate in the tournament.

South Carolina, Maryland, Clemson and Virginia are all below .500 in tournament history. The Tigers and Cavaliers have lost 17 of 20 tourney games.

The Wolfpack supremacy in the tournament may be expected, since the first 13 were played in Reynolds Coliseum.

And the Pack, seeded fourth in the first tourney in 1954, pulled the first surprise, beating Wake Forest 82-80 in an overtime final game. Ev Case's squad then won the next two tournament before bowing to Carolina's national champs in 1957.

Maryland, ranked fourth in the regular season, upset Carolina 86-74 in the '58 finals. In 1959, State and UNC tied for the regular season championship and the Wolfpack beat the Heels in the finals 80-56.

Duke then pulled probably the tournament's biggest upset in 1960, beating Carolina and Wake in the semifinals and finals after finishing fourth in the regular season with a 7-7 slate.

Wake won the 1961 classic with Carolina absent, then defeated Clemson in the 1962 finals behind Len Chappell. The Tigers had their only moment of glory that year, knocking out favored State and Duke in the first two rounds.

Art Heyman and Jeff Mullins led Duke past Wake Forest in the next two final games, and the Blue Devils were third and second in the NCAA's.

Another good Duke team, with a sharp-shooting soph named Bob Verga, bowed to second-seeded N.C. State in the '65 finals. Larry Worsley of Oak City, N.C. came off the bench to score 30 points in the final game.

Duke's last tourney win came in 1966 with Jack Marin, Steve Vacendak and Verga outpointing State in the finals after surviving Carolina's four corners in the semifinals 21-20.

Then Bob Lewis, Larry Miller, Charlie Scott & Co. took over for three tournament wins. The

Tar Heels beat Duke in the finals twice and would have met the Blue Devils all three years had it not been for State's 12-10 stall win in the 1968 semifinals.

Carolina finished fourth, second, and fourth those three years, and Charlie Scott's 40 points in the 85-74 victory over Duke in 1969 may have been the tournament's greatest moment.

South Carolina appeared to have last year's showdown sewed up when Duke and Carolina were eliminated in the first round, but the Wolfpack again delayed the tempo and followed Vann Williford's leadership to a 42-39 win in double overtime.

Again the cries of "end the tournament" came up, chiefly from Columbia, S.C. But the three-day paradox is still with us.

"I'd enjoy it if I was one of you guys," McGuire recently told some writers. "I'd love to sit back and watch all those guys. But it's murder on a coach."

"Dean Smith and Carolina should be headed to the regionals right now."

The saddest part about the tourney is the number of great players who have never won it. Among them are Charlie Davis, John Roche, Bill Cunningham, Lee Shaffer, Dickie Hemric, Joe Belmont, Buzz Wilkinson and Doug Moe.

But somehow, the tournament has never distracted from the excitement of the regular season, and has never hurt ACC recruiting.

And for three days, when the crowds are roaring with the knowledge that anything can happen, the ACC tournament's excitement somehow overshadows its unfairness.