Roy Williams retires after 33 years of coaching
Thank you for everything, Roy!
from the Chapel Hill community
Friday, April 2, 2021

Thank you, Roy

Despite retirement, Williams’ spirit is alive in Chapel Hill

By Zachary Crain
Sports Editor
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Inside the Dean E. Smith Center in Chapel Hill, the spirit of Roy Williams will always live. Not just on the court, where his name is etched in cursive on both ends. Not just on the Jumbotron hanging above the stands in all four corners, which flashed photos of the 43-year collegiate coaching veteran on Thursday.

Not just in the banners he helped hang, either, which signal the three national championships he won during the summer.

And not alone. His wife, Wanda, stood next to his players — both current and former — on the far sideline. And after 18 years pacing those Carolina Blue sidelines, he walked through that tunnel for the last time as a coach, that was really difficult. And when I realized that I was gonna walk through that tunnel for the last time as a coach, that was very difficult.

On Thursday, Williams was not alone. His wife, Wanda, stood next to his players — both current and former — on the far sideline.

“I’ve been so, so lucky. For the rest of my life, I’ll always say that I was a coach. And that’s the proudest moment of my life.”

Roy Williams

UNC’s director of athletics, Bubba Cunningham, and Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz sat by him. He thanked his players — Marvin Williams, Tyler Hansbrough, Kenny Williams — and he thanked his mentors. Names brought tears to his eyes, but he wiped them away, and said more thank-you’s.

“Student-athletes, coaches and players have prospered under his leadership,” Guskiewicz said. “Many are on the banners floating above us today. Yet thousands of other students who never met Coach Williams have benefited from his and Wanda’s generosity.

A week before his retirement, the Williams family donated $3 million to fund student scholarships at UNC. The family contributed $600,000 to fund athlete scholarships last spring. Forty-eight or so years. Nine-hundred-and-three college wins.

In the house that Dean built and the one he christened, he was sure to say one thing: “It’s been a thrill, it has been unbelievable,” Williams said. “I’ve loved it. It’s coaching, that’s all I’ve ever wanted to do since the summer after my ninth grade year in high school. No one has ever enjoyed coaching the way I have for 48 years.”

Williams said he’s not the right man for the job anymore. Not the best man, he was careful to point out — he never considers himself the best at anything — but the right one.

But before he walked back through the tunnel, one last time, in the house that Dean built and the one he christened, he was sure to say one thing:

“I’ve been so, so lucky,” he said. “For the rest of my life, I’ll always say that I was a coach. And that’s the proudest moment of my life.”

Twitter: @zachycrain

Respect everyone and fear no one.

ROY WILLIAMS
Williams exits as ‘right man’ for the job

By Ryan Wilcox
Senior Writer
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Well, daggum. What other words to capture the gravity of this moment — for Chapel Hill residents, for fans of UNC athletics, for anyone who follows college basketball? What other words to grasp one of the biggest seismic shifts in the sports landscape in recent memory?

And what other words to capture the feeling of head coach Roy Williams, on the court bearing his name, announcing that he was no longer fit for one of the most prestigious jobs in college basketball?

“I’m not gonna say the ‘best’ man, because I never thought I was the best at doing things,” Williams said, dressed in a pink tie with a Carolina Blue blazer. “Fifteen years at Kansas, I felt that I was the right man, and this time at North Carolina I felt that I was the right man. I no longer feel that I am the right man for the job.”

Yes, after 33 seasons, 903 wins and three national championships, the head coach and forever Tar Heel announced his retirement on Thursday, closing the book on a legendary career, beginning a new era of UNC athletics and ending perhaps the most fruitful stretch in basketball program history.

In some ways, the April Fools’ Day press release seemed like a joke until the very moment the 70-year-old Hall of Famer walked out of the Dean E. Smith Center tunnel, to a standing ovation from boosters and former players. It took nearly the entire hour-long press conference to realize that yes, it was here, and yes, it was now, and yes, the words “Roy Williams, current head coach of UNC basketball” would never again be accurate.

“The only thing I’ve ever wanted to do is coach ... it’s all I’ve ever done,” he said. “I’m scared to death of trying to do something that’s not coaching.”

Williams’ career spanned nearly a half-century, beginning at Owen High School in Black Mountain, N.C., and taking him everywhere from Lawrence, Kan., to Final Fours across the country to the very summit of the college basketball world.

It included the third-most victories of any coach, the sixth-highest winning percentage in NCAA history, a National Coach of the Decade award and three national championships, in 2005, 2009 and 2017.

In between, too were his countless Royisms — utterances of “darn” and “friggin’,” oblique cultural references and GIFable locker room dances, plaid sport coats and crisp Air Jordans alongside the requisite claims that he had no idea which pair of kicks he was wearing, exactly.

And yet the most prominent constant was always the shadow and influence of Dean Smith, the progenitor of Tar Heel hoops and “the perfect picture of what a college basketball coach should have been,” Williams once said. Smith is the man who gave Williams his coaching start, putting his own spin on the North Carolina system and making dominant big men and fast-break-inclined point guard play the modus operandi.

Claims of the game passing Williams by became louder this year, especially as UNC floundered in 2019-20 and only snuck into the postseason in 2020-21. Already his own biggest critic, Williams said he started to become “really bothered” by his own mistakes, to the point where continuing was no longer an option.

“This morning I talked to the team, and it was really difficult,” he said. “I came in and I saw the former players in the lounge — that was really difficult. And when I realized that I was gonna walk through that tunnel for the last time as a coach, that was very difficult.”

That is why Thursday afternoon felt so unbelievable: the idea that Williams, one of the five most successful coaches in the modern game by any stretch, still hadn’t done enough — for UNC, for Chapel Hill, for Dean Smith.

Still, no matter how much Williams deflects praise or absorbs blame, he won’t — can’t — erase his greatest accomplishment: matching, if not eclipsing his mentor, passing Smith in both national championships and all-time wins and leaving a legacy that’s as gargantuan as any in college basketball.

So, yes — Williams was the right man for many years, and for many players, and for many teams. And as he looks toward a new chapter, all the rest of us can hope is that he knows that himself.
By PJ Morales
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A little over a year ago, The Daily Tar Heel published an article speculating on who might replace UNC men’s basketball head coach Roy Williams once he retired.

But then, a year later and after a second consecutive underperforming season, Williams announced his retirement on Thursday after 33 seasons. So now, the Tar Heel faithful are faced with the question they’ve never wanted to ask themselves: Who could replace Roy?

Hubert Davis

Since the time of Dean Smith, the Carolina Way has been to keep the head coaching job in the Tar Heel family. If that remains true for Williams and UNC Athletic Director Bubba Cunningham, then nobody fits the bill better than current assistant coach Hubert Davis.

Davis is a Tar Heel, through and through. He played four years under Smith, from 1988-1992, helping UNC to win the 1989 and 1991 ACC Tournament Championships. In 2012, Davis rejoined the Tar Heels as an assistant under Williams and has been with the team for nearly a decade, contributing to the Tar Heels’ 2017 National Championship win. If UNC chooses to follow the template of the past, Davis would be a solid choice for the job.

Wes Miller

There is one thing Davis lacks, though: head coaching experience of his own. If Cunningham and co. are looking for an option with proven success at the helm of their own team, they need not look further than Wes Miller, current head coach of UNC-Greensboro.

Miller has the UNC connection — he won the 2005 National Championship while playing under Williams from 2004-2007, and his brother is transferring UNC big Walker Miller. Despite being just 38 years old, he also has the experience, serving as the UNC-G Spartans’ head coach for the last 10 years. His 185 wins make him UNC-G’s winningest head coach of all time. During Miller’s tenure, the Spartans have won the Southern Conference regular season championship three times and the tournament championship twice. His Spartans have qualified for the NCAA Tournament twice, losing in the first round in both 2018 and 2021.

If experience, success and the UNC family are priorities during the selection process, Miller might be just the kind of coach they’re looking for.

Porter Moser

Maybe, after a long sequence of head coaches with ties to the team, the powers that be will decide to hire a coach from outside of the family. If that ends up being the case, then the name UNC fans should be salivating over is Loyola Chicago Ramblers’ head coach Porter Moser.

Moser and the Ramblers have been the Cinderella-style belles of the ball at March Madness twice over the last few years. In 2018, Moser led the Ramblers on a miraculous run to the Final Four of the NCAA Tournament. A down-on-its-luck blue blood team like UNC, paired with a head coach who has defeated powerhousees with a mid-major program, might just be a match made in heaven.

Twitter: @pjdaman12

I may sound like a 12-year-old, but this is really a dream come true. I love this program.

ROY WILLIAMS

Visit our web store for memorabilia (before it’s all gone!)
COLUMN: Roy matched Dean by being himself

By Hunter Nelson
Assitant Sports Editor

Dean and Roy: two short, simple names that will never be separated.

Both men are tied to the four-man line that was their birthright, coaching under the wing of Dean, who was coached by Kansas legend Phog Allen, himself a pupil of the game’s inventor, Dr. Naismith.

Taking the reins of basketball achievements, the connection is obvious. Dean won 879 games; Roy won 903. Dean went to 11 Final Fours; Roy went nine. And as fans in Chapel Hill will most remember, Dean won two national titles, Roy won three.

Their first days as the leading figure of the Tar Heels also draw parallels. Dean inherited a program in turmoil and built it into a powerhouse. A half-century later, Roy took that dying power that was 8-20 in 1992 and cut down the nets in just three years’ time.

And now, after the many highs and lows of their respective careers, it is only fitting that both had the final word at the shocking endings. Dean called it quits just weeks before his team’s Final Four defense in 1997, and Roy, after weeks of denial, has stopped playing on a seemingly random Thursday morning.

If you were to ask Roy what he thought of those attachments, you’d surely get some mixed emotions. He’d hold tightly to his trademark grin, knowing that he’d told the man that first helped him land an assistant coaching gig for his home state’s most prestigious team.

On the other, his humble personality would likely prevent him from thinking he was over a fraction of the coast there.

It didn’t matter that he finally relinquished mentor in both national championships and total wins. At the end of the day, he still remembers his days as a student sitting in the bleachers of Carmichael Arena, taking notes and hoping to soak up as much knowledge as possible from the Dean of basketball.

But on the day of his retirement — April Fool’s Day, no less — it was time to put all jokes aside and restate the obvious: Roy’s legacy at UNC equates to the man who once seemed impossible.

Throughout his time in Chapel Hill, Roy adopted many of Dean’s coaching philosophies. Teams ran the break, fed the post and acknowledged one another for their unselfishness.

But most importantly, he reinstalled Dean’s strongest orders: Play hard, play smart and play together.

As time went along, some questioned whether the game had passed him by. College basketball became more and more dependent on the one-and-done style of roster construction, and the Tar Heels were heavily dependent on more experienced players.

In three separate instances, he silenced the critics by taking home the hardware. For each of those championship teams, Roy was loyal to those that were loyal to him, as each member of the starting lineup was an upperclassman.

Although each of these strategies led to success in his 16-year tenure at UNC, perhaps his most lasting trait has been off-the-court leadership. Sure, Roy has not yet had the opportunity to gift each of his former players $200 to treat their families to a nice dinner, as Dean did when he passed in 2015, but maybe such a possibility will exist in the future.

For the time being, he’ll have to rely on the senior night speeches from Marcus Paige, Cameron Johnson and others to describe his “life-changing” influence.

The near future is uncertain for UNC basketball. In the coming weeks, a search will be conducted to find someone to fill in the assorted Carolina Blue Air Jordans that Roy left behind.

By Daniel Blank
Former Senior Writer

A look back at UNC’s 2005 national title

ST. LOUIS — They started their careers by getting even.

Three cocky college freshmen with dreams of stardom and championship banners were humbled, humiliated.

That’s what a 20-win season will do, especially at a program where 20-win seasons are viewed as a birthright.

But seniors Jawad Williams, Jackie Manuel and Deron Williams were combined two for 15 in the first half — Illinois in the national championship game — a game that elevated a program from embarrassment to the pinnacle of college basketball in just three years.

“We didn’t panic,” Jawad Williams said. “We knew we had a big lead on the court before, so we just went out there and made plays.”

On the ensuing possession, Felton silenced the crowd with a spot-up from the left wing. Still, Illinois wouldn’t fade and retied the score at 70 on a 3-pointer by Head, who along with Deron Williams was named to the all-tournament team.

But that would be the last shot Illinois would hit, as the 3s the Illini relied on so heavily to make the comeback started falling again. Illinois misfired on 28 of 40 3-point attempts, and the Tar Heels’ defense shined.

“We fought back and tied it up, but they made the plays and we didn’t,” Deron Williams said. “They made the plays down the stretch, and we didn’t.”

Two possessions after Head tied the game, Rashad McCants, who scored all 14 of his points in the first half, drove baseline and missed a reverse layup — but freshman Marvin Williams swooped in for the tip that pushed UNC to the victory.

“I just play as hard as I can,” Williams said. “Good things happen when you play hard — Coach always tells us that — so I give it everything I have.”

Felton, who made a crucial steal with 30 seconds left and UNC clinging to a 72-70 lead, added three free throws to clinch the national championship for the Tar Heels.

At the final buzzer sounded, May ran to embrace Roy Williams as the rest of his teammates piled on each other at center court.

Several minutes later, Scott was eagerly waiting for the last shot from the line, knowing that his coach wouldn’t be able to criticize him anymore because he’s finally got that one championship ring,” Williams said. “I knew I was going to be the first one because number one is on my jersey, number one in the country and all that. It’s a great feeling, man, just to cut the nets down.”

Scott said with the rave wrapped around his neck.

“It’s finally over. We finally did it. My dream has finally come true.”

Twitter: @dthnelsonrucker

But for the next few days, fans should simply sit back and reminisce about the glory days of yesterday. Watching two figures on the doorstep of the sport’s Mount Rushmore is something that few get to experience.

Twitter: @nelsongrabber

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE DAILY TAR HEEL ARCHIVES

The Archive: The 2005 UNC Men’s Basketball team receives the national title trophy following their 75-70 victory over Illinois in St. Louis, Missouri on April 4, 2005.

You’ve heard me say it a thousand times: the ball goes in the basket, everything looks better.

— April Fools’ Day, no less — it is time to put all jokes aside and restate the obvious: Roy’s legacy at UNC equates to the man who once seemed impossible.

The Daily Tar Heel
Friday, April 2, 2021

@classicnca Twitter: @nelsonhunter_
Thank you, Roy

Seven questions Roy has never been asked

By Ryan Wilcox
Senior Writer
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This story was originally published on Sept. 13, 2020.

We tried to ask Roy Williams questions he has (hopefully) never been asked before. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

THE DAILY TAR HEEL: Have you ever mentioned to Michael Jordan that you helped coach the only team that ever beat the Dream Team (a college all-star team that won a scrimmage against the pros)?

ROY WILLIAMS: “laughs” we had that discussion many years ago, yes. He just told me what the score was the next day, when they beat us by 58 in a 30-minute scrimmage.

DTH: What do you think a Coach Smith program would look like in the era of one and done? How do you think it would’ve been different than, say, 1990?

WILLIAMS: It’s interesting, because he was one of the first coaches to really encourage guys to leave early, as early as Bob McAdoo in 1972. But I think it would be different. Coach Smith, with all of his beliefs — the game today would be almost 180 degrees away from what he believed in. But also, he was very intelligent, and would change with the times. It would still be North Carolina basketball, and they would still have a chance to beat everybody, because Coach would make sure that would happen.

DTH: Who are your biggest coaching influences outside of people you’ve worked with? When you’re watching film, who do you steal from the most?

WILLIAMS: I’ve always said that probably 80 percent of the things we do, I get directly from Coach Smith. But during my more formative years, the other three big influences were Bob Knight, John Thompson and Jerry Tarkanian. I talked to those guys and went to watch all of them at practice during my first two or three years at Kansas. They treated me great and are all guys that I considered mentors.

DTH: You and Coach K get stuck in an elevator for five hours. What are you guys talking about?

WILLIAMS: Well it wouldn’t take five hours, because I’d get us out of the elevator. I worked elevator construction one summer when I was in college, so I think I can get out of about every elevator. But if that didn’t work — we can’t talk about golf, because Mike doesn’t play golf. We’d talk a while, and we’re both old enough that I’d have one corner and he’d have the other corner and we’d take a nap for a while. So after talking about basketball and changing the world and those kind of things, we’re both old enough that we could get comfortable.

DTH: What’s something that you can regularly beat Michael Jordan in?

WILLIAMS: I used to beat him in golf when we first started playing, and now that’s much more difficult to do. He’s gotten better; I’ve gotten worse. Fishing, he’s a lot better at fishing than I am. I used to play a lot of baseball, but he almost made the major leagues, so I’m not gonna pick that… I can’t think of anything. I can’t think of anything that I would beat him at that takes physical ability. And if I did beat him, it’d just be because I out-talked him.

DTH: If you weren’t a basketball coach, what would you be doing?

WILLIAMS: I’ve thought of that one a lot. I really don’t know. I’ve always said that if I weren’t a basketball coach, I would probably be mowing greens on a golf course, or working as a ranger on a golf course, so I can get free golf.

DTH: Last one: What’s a question you’ve always wanted a reporter to ask you that you’ve never been asked?

WILLIAMS: “laughs” That’s the first time I’ve ever been asked that question, so it must be a good one. I always laugh when they say, “Coach, have you ever thought of…” because I always say, “Yes I have” before they even tell me what it is. It’s our life 365 days a year to do this, you think somebody else in another profession is gonna think of something we haven’t thought about? But I’d have to say to answer to your question is, there isn’t one.
CONGRATULATIONS

and

THANK YOU

COACH

Thanks for the memories!
When touring UNC to decide whether it was a right fit for him, Jordan Lawrence, class of 2010, vividly remembers seeing Carolina Blue paint remains on the streets after men’s basketball head coach Roy Williams’ first NCAA Championship win in 2005.

To feel the buzz of Chapel Hill was electric for Lawrence, and Williams’ win was factored into his decision to attend the University.

“My mother went to UNC as well, and we watched the (2005) game with her and the house and freaked out because I was raised on Carolina basketball,” Lawrence said. “So to go there and buy my championship basketball, was definitely the final page of that year was definitely the final page of being a University of North Carolina basketball fan if you will.

To feel the buzz of Chapel Hill was electric for Lawrence, and Williams’ win was factored into his decision to attend the University.

My mom went to UNC as well, and we watched the (2005) game with her and the house and freaked out because I was raised on Carolina basketball," Lawrence said. “So to go there and buy my championship basketball, was definitely the final page of being a UNC fan for life.

Through numerous NCAA Tournament runs, Williams has shown why UNC is often noted as the University of National Champions.

Tony Coggins, class of ’97, was a 7-year-old senior in high school when UNC won the national championship in 2005. He thought once he got to the University that it would be a long time before another championship, due to the team losing a lot of talent.

He was later shocked by Williams’ recruits who won to go on to win another in 2009.

“That first year though, it really felt like we were going to be in a rebuilding year because I think we’re lost our top seven scorers,” Coggins said. “Me and my friend were lucky enough to get tickets to that first game, and I just remember being really close… But little did we know that Tyler Hansbrough was going to turn into Psycho T, so I was very jealous during the four years.

Williams left a lasting impression on the UNC community, and students could see how much he loved not only basketball, but also his players.

Haley Kirse was a sophomore when Williams won his last national championship, and she said that will be the most memorable day of her life.

“I never met him personally, but I wish I had,” Kirse said. “I feel like he was a running joke where people call him their second grandpa because he’s just a nice man, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen another coach love his players more than him. And that’s why I think it was so special when they won in 2017 — because they were a family.”

Twitter: @jdleser
Roy Williams is born in Marion, North Carolina

Roy Williams joins the freshman team for UNC

Roy Williams is hired as Kansas' head coach, replacing former UNC player Larry Brown

Williams wins his first game as UNC's head coach, a 90–64 win over Old Dominion

UNC wins the national championship over Illinois, the program's first national title since 1983 and first under Roy Williams. Final score 75–70

UNC wins its second national championship under Roy Williams over Michigan State. Final score 89–72

UNC wins its third national championship under Roy Williams, over Gonzaga 71–65

Roy Williams ties his mentor Dean Smith in total wins with 879 in a 70–67 win over Yale

Roy Williams wins his 200th ACC game in a 85–79 win over N.C. State

Roy Williams wins his 903rd game, passing Bob Knight for third-most all time

Williams announces his retirement as head coach of North Carolina

Williams wins an Olympic bronze medal as part of the coaching staff of the USA Basketball team after defeating Lithuania

Roy Williams is enshrined in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame

UNC names the playing floor at the Dean E. Smith Center

Roy Williams wins his 880th game to take sole possession of fourth place all time for DI men’s college coach wins

Roy Williams coaches his last game in the Dean E. Smith Center, a 91–73 win over Duke on the Tar Heels’ senior night

Williams coaches his last game for UNC, an 85–62 loss to Wisconsin in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament
Coach Roy Williams

Thank you for always sharing with us your consummate examples of integrity, kindness, leadership, and humility.

Your heart for service inspired us all.
How Roy’s exit could impact recruiting

By Jeremiah Holloway
Senior Writer
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With the retirement of legendary UNC head coach Roy Williams, North Carolina is faced with the reality of establishing a new recruitment strategy.

During Williams’ tenure at UNC, the team thrived primarily from players that remained with the program for three or four seasons before leaving. Although there have been some exceptions to this trend, many of Williams’ best teams had an assortment of older players in the starting lineup.

A big testament to UNC’s commitment to developing players is seen in the makeup of its national championship teams. For all three teams, every player in the starting lineup was a junior or senior.

In recent years, however, the recruitment strategy began to change. Seven players left for the NBA after one season — five of them departing in the last four seasons — reflecting a trend toward the one-and-done philosophy of college basketball.

Lately, the Tar Heels have also had more interaction with the transfer portal. The team brought in Cameron Johnson after winning the championship in 2017, and he became one of the best shooters in program history. Christian Keeling and Justin Pierce also arrived at Chapel Hill as transfers in 2019.

Upon Williams’ exit, UNC truly has a clean slate. First-year big men Day’Ron Sharpe and Walker Kessler have left the program, as Sharpe declared for the draft and Kessler has entered the transfer portal. Although the Tar Heels do not currently have a clear-cut star player, they do have some foundational pieces for the future.

Among the key players returning is the team’s leading scorer from last season, big man Armando Bacot, who is entering his junior season at UNC. Highly touted first-year guard Caleb Love announced his return after a tumultuous first season, and his experience could help the team return to its typical strategy of having players develop within the program.

UNC’s recruiting class for the 2021-22 season features two four-star players: guard D’Marco Dunn and forward Dontrez Styles. Four-star players usually stay on the team longer, meaning their development could help North Carolina in seasons down the road.

Since UNC’s recruiting methods have been unorthodox of late, returning to older methods or ushering in a new era of recruiting are both in the realm of possibility.

Determining the type of offense UNC hopes to run will impact how the team will recruit players. If running fast-paced offenses remains a priority for the new head coach, then finding guards who can push the ball down the court will continue to be the strategy. If the team wants to space the floor, then big men with reliable shooting abilities will be targets.

An immediate need for the Tar Heels is a wing player who can create their own shot. Most of their scoring last season came from the big men, with the guards providing somewhat of a lift, although inefficiently at times. Adding more scorers will open up the court and give players like Bacot more space to operate in the post.

The long-term recruiting strategy for North Carolina will reflect the reality that the team’s leadership is much different. The dynamics of the Tar Heels under a new coach will inevitably change, but the roster construction will also be a representation of the program’s next steps.

Twitter: @jerem11ah

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Roy Williams and Joel Berry

Thank you, Roy

Thank you coach, you will be missed

Chapel Hill Sportswear

“ I had to just slap him on the butt and say, ‘Play, big fella.’ ”

Roy Williams
hey! College students:

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Thank you, Roy

Roy never threw a fit — he just flexed them

Roy Williams wears his trusty Nike Air Jordan 1 Retro UNC sneakers for “Suits and Sneakers Week” in 2019.

Roy Williams discusses strategy with junior guard Jackie Manuel while donning a white mock neck sweater and a brown sport coat during a 2003 game.

Roy Williams celebrates with the team while wearing a backward baseball cap after winning the ACC Tournament Championship game in 2016.

Roy Williams rocks a pink blazer paired with Nike Air Jordan 1 Retro UNC sneakers during 2019’s Late Night with Roy.

If someone says your name and it makes someone else smile, that’s a good legacy to leave.

ROY WILLIAMS
Nothing gold can stay — even Roy Williams

ROY WILLIAMS

Get your Coach Roy memorabilia before it’s gone!

The Daily Tar Heel

store.dailyytarheel.com

He’s a tough little nut out there today. — ROY WILLIAMS
Friday, April 2, 2021

The Daily Tar Heel

Thank you, Roy

By Brian Keyes
Senior Writer
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Former DTH sports editors react to Roy Williams’ retirement

After a weekly avail, Kirschner called and asked Steve Kirschner if Roy

I made an exception for this one

my dad swears is him from that game book, ‘Hard Work,’ came out, a photo

Roy's went to overtime and Hendersonville dad fouled Roy, he fouled out, Roy

same area of Western N.C. at the Sports Editor

Brooke Pryor, Fall of 2013

Hall of Fame coach. Here’s what them about their thoughts on the

writer Brian Keyes reached out coach Roy Williams announced

On UNC Men’s basketball head coach Roy Williams announced his retirement on Thursday, senior writer Brian Keyes reached out to several previous sports editors of The Daily Tar Heel to ask them about their thoughts on the moment and their memories of the Hall of Fame coach. Here’s what they had to say.

Brooke Pryor, Fall of 2013 Sports Editor

My dad and Roy grew up in the

I don’t ask for autographs. Ever.

Ohio State, so I knew I wanted to

And then gave a totally different description of the game, including starters for both teams, where his group won.

He signed the book, 'Doug. We need to talk. Roy.' When people ask me why I love sports, I tell them it’s the people. Roy is the best example of those people.

Chris Trenkle, 2018-2019 Sports Editor

The first time I covered a men’s basketball press conference I was

I remember getting my first

Chris Trenkle called me back and I met Roy outside the work room and relayed the story. Roy said, “Now I don’t know about that.” And then gave a totally different description of the game, including starters for both teams, where his group won.

He signed the book, 'Doug. We need to talk. Roy.' When people ask me why I love sports, I tell them it’s the people. Roy is the best example of those people.

C Jackson Cowart, 2016-2017 Sports Editor

When I was watching Roy

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C Jackson Cowart called me back and I met Roy outside the work room and relayed the story. Roy said, “Now I don’t know about that.” And then gave a totally different description of the game, including starters for both teams, where his group won.

He signed the book, 'Doug. We need to talk. Roy.' When people ask me why I love sports, I tell them it’s the people. Roy is the best example of those people.

Pat James, 2015-2016 Sports Editor

Where I come from, Roy Williams

I started to ask if Felton would get more playing time after his OSU performance and Roy gave me a deadpan look.

“Did you watch the game before Ohio State?” he asked. “I mean come on now…think about your questions. He mocked.” Reporters around me started chuckling at what Roy said. And then another reporter asked a question Roy looked at me and said “You haven’t been here as long as some of these other guys have.” At the time I didn’t think much of that, but now I look back at that video and laugh.

The point is, if you covered the team enough times, you were going to get one of those Roy responses. It made me work harder. It made me try and ask better questions. And it removed any intimidation I had at future press conferences, since there was no way I could do any worse than I did at that first one. Plus, getting told off by a Hall of Fame coach makes for a pretty good story.

The Tar Heels - Volume I is available

The Tar Heels - Volume I is the first of a three volume work by Ron Smith. Ron’s exhaustive research of over 30 years has uncovered details about the formation of UNC Basketball and every season beginning in 1911. Roy Williams’ association with UNC Basketball started much earlier than many people realize. In Volume I you will learn where Coach Williams’ story began.

You have got to get this book if you are a North Carolina basketball fan. I’ve never seen a book with so many great never seen before pictures. I thought I knew all about the Carolina-Duke rivalry but now I know it goes back a lot longer than I thought. Lots of other great stories and detailed season by season recap are fantastic. It’s a must have.

Phil Ford

This comprehensive book includes rosters, schedules, results and stats for each season. Learn how the program became one of the most successful and respected in college basketball.

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The Tar Heels- Vol I is available for purchase now at: www.thetarheelbook.com

Everything’s fine in Chapel Hill today.

ROY WILLIAMS
THANK YOU, COACH WILLIAMS

FANS! GET YOUR FREE OL’ ROY DONUT WITH THE PURCHASE OF ANY BEVERAGE

SATURDAY, APRIL 3RD 2021

Available at all participating locations in North Carolina.
Always a Tar Heel

I like to tell my team, ‘Let’s go into their living room and steal their brownies.’

ROY WILLIAMS
Brandon Robinson thought it was an April Fools’ joke when he read the news. The former UNC basketball guard from 2016 to 2020 assumed head coach Roy Williams would coach until he couldn’t anymore, so he initially brushed off the breaking headlines as a bad prank. But when Robinson saw the announcement from UNC basketball and his phone started flooding with notifications of the announcements’ legitimacy, he was shocked to his core — it’s true.

After 18 seasons, Williams really is retiring.

“He used to make jokes in practice like, ‘If you don’t like it, you should leave because I’m gonna be here for 10 more years,’” Robinson said. “It’s crazy he’s done right now. I felt like he still has something left in him.”

Robinson was in disbelief and planned to watch Thursday afternoon’s press conference because he needed confirmation from Williams himself to believe it. But mostly, Robinson felt grateful.

“He gave me the opportunity of a lifetime that I can’t repay him for,” Robinson said. “He means the world to me and I appreciate him so much.”

And he’s not the only one. There’s been an outpouring of congratulations, anecdotes and thank-you’s from former UNC players.

“You’ve impacted my life more than you could ever understand,” Brice Johnson stated.

“A legend,” Kenny Williams III confirmed on Twitter.

As the head coach of Kansas for 15 seasons and of UNC for 18, Williams has guided 52 players into the NBA, and even more players into successful careers elsewhere.

Marcus Paige, one of the most impactful players in recent memory for North Carolina, said Williams’ impact went further than words can describe.

“I don’t have the words to decribe in one message the impact Coach (Roy Williams) had on my life!” Paige said in a Tweet.

The consensus? Roy Williams made an impact far beyond the basketball court.

“He’s like a father figure,” Philadelphia 76ers guard Danny Green said Thursday during a media conference in Cleveland. “That four years there taught me a lot about not just the game of basketball but about life. I’m happy for him. I hope he’s at peace. He’s always been a lot more than a coach to me.”

Green, the owner of four championship rings — three in the NBA and the other with UNC from the 2009 NCAA Championship — said he called Williams to thank him. Others went to thank him in-person.

A crowd of former players gathered in the lounge at the Dean E. Smith Center Thursday to speak to Williams.

“When I came in and saw the former players in the lounge, it was really difficult,” Williams said. “And when I realized I was going to walk through that tunnel for the last time, it was really difficult.”

Williams said he loves his former players and made sure to verbally thank them in his press conference. But really, he has shown that love through his actions over the years: Williams visited Coby White on Nov. 13, 2019 in Chicago to watch the Bulls guard become the youngest NBA player to make seven 3-pointers — and give him a hug.

In 2017, Williams broke an awkward silence as he and Robinson were in an elevator heading to practice for the 2017 Final Four in Phoenix, just to tell the young guard he’d one day be a big-time player for North Carolina.

Williams has impacted the lives of his players since he took on the role as assistant coach for Dean Smith at UNC in 1978. Now, he just plans to be a better golfer, a more present husband to his wife, Wanda, and a fun grandparent.

But for UNC basketball players, he will always be “Coach.”

“I’ve been so, so lucky,” Williams said. “For the rest of my life, I’ll always say that I was a coach. And that’s the proudest moment of my life.”

Twitter: @macyemeyer

“You’ve impacted my life more than you could ever understand.”

Brice Johnson
North Carolina Season 2012-1016

By Macy Meyer
Senior Writer
sports@dailytarheel.com

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