I took that personally.

ARMANDO BACOT

The junior forward dropped a season-high 21 points against Duke

By Gwen Peace
Assistant Sports Editor

The Daily Tar Heel

FIVE HOURS BEFORE EVERY GAME, Harrison Ingram’s father Tyrous sends him a text: “Let’s rock.”

He responds with a “Let’s rock” of his own, followed by two red exclamation point emojis.

That’s their ritual. According to him, it’s been working “100 percent.”

In No. 3 North Carolina’s 93-84 win over No. 7 Duke on Saturday night, the junior wing recorded a season-high 21 points, along with a game-high 13 rebounds and four steals. The performance marked his seventh double-double of the season, each one accompanying a UNC win.

“In this, the most fun game I’ve ever played in my life,” Ingram said. “The most lit game, the most happy [and the most] intense.”

Before tipoff, both of his parents and his sister Lauren sat in row C of section 109, nervous. But Harrison wasn’t worried. He had a typical morning, waking up at 11:30 a.m., making his bed, blasting “Hips Don’t Lie” by Shakira and eating breakfast before getting in his car to head to the Dean E. Smith Center.

Lauren, who plays on the Duke volleyball team, had called him to check in on how he was feeling. “I asked him earlier if he was nervous and he said, ‘Not at all,’” she told The Daily Tar Heel, “So, I felt like that was a good sign. I knew he was going to show up and perform.”

Ingram did just that. Ingram was all over the floor, forcing turnovers, scoring points, hyping up his teammates and grabbing crucial rebounds to give the Tar Heels the upper hand. He logged 38 minutes of play, never once slowing down — something he credits to the intense cardio training he did over the summer, which got him in “the best shape of his life.”

“He’s always breeding energy and effort [and] enthusiasm,” head coach Hubert Davis said. “[There’s] a toughness about it.”

This was evident throughout the game. Ingram was diving across the court to catch loose balls, clapping in the face of his opponents and partaking in the “too small” celebration with Armando Bacot. At one point, he even had to be separated from the Blue Devils after a foul call he disagreed with.

Ingram tied his career high with four steals and drained five 3-pointers — also a career high — to help him notch his 21 points. Simply put, he was charged up.

“I told Harry, for us to win this...”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

BY THE NUMBERS

• It’s been 1,792 days since UNC last beat Duke in front of a sellout home crowd.
• Harrison Ingram made 5 3-pointers, a career high.
• Armando Bacot scored 25 points, his most ever against the Blue Devils.
• This game marked the fourth consecutive game against Duke in which Bacot has recorded a double-double.
• There have been 49 top-10 matchups between UNC and Duke — the most ever in college basketball history.
Bacot dominates Blue Devils in paint

Graduate forward impressed in final home game against Duke

By Caroline Wills
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UNC graduate forward Armando Bacot (5) dunks the ball during the men’s basketball game against Duke at the Dean E. Smith Center on Saturday.

In No. 3 North Carolina’s 93-84 handling of No. 7 Duke, the graduate center’s aggressive action on both ends of the floor made him the second Tar Heel, and first since Charlie Scott, to compile at least 25 points, 10 rebounds and five assists against Duke.

“Knew coming into this game, I would have a big game,” Bacot said. Approaching Saturday’s top-10 matchup, Bacot said he was pitted off. Online, he read about people questioning him and how much he really wanted it.

“I took that personally,” he said. After three straight games with single-digit points for the big man, Bacot and head coach Hubert Davis decided to change up their usual weekly meeting topic. Davis usually has a strict “no basketball talk” rule for these. But this time, instead of chatting about school, Netflix or food like they usually do, the head coach made an exception.

On Thursday, Davis had to set the record straight about a few things. He told Bacot that his role on the team’s plays to allow Bacot to get the ball, and Davis would tweak with a game plan: Bacot needed to be a specific person’s team. Then, the head coach and his center came up with a game plan. Bacot needed to be more aggressive and work harder to get the ball, and Davis would tweak the team’s plays to allow Bacot to get the ball in easier spots.

“It’s really important for me for Armando to finish out his career the right way,” Davis said. He paid off. Not only did Bacot find his groove on the offensive end, but the graduate center found a way to defend Filipowski without fouling — something Davis said he was very concerned about going into Saturday.

And then with just under five minutes remaining, Bacot spun past Filipowski and earned an and-one to give UNC an 11-point lead. When the whistle blew to give Filipowski his fourth foul, Bacot held down his hand in a “too small” taunt directed at the seven-footer guarding him.

“A lot of times when I catch it in the post, sometimes I’m looking to pass, not force too much, not do too much,” Bacot said. “But I thought today, I really just wanted to take it to his chest.”

His mom, Christie Lomax, said Saturday’s game was an emotional moment. That morning, she sat breakfast with the other parents of the basketball team and watched ESPN College GameDay’s segment interviewing her son and senior guard RJ Davis. That’s when it hit her: This is it. This is the last time he’ll play Duke at the Smith Center.

“I didn’t have any expectation, [I] just wanted [him] to have fun, live in the moment,” she told The Daily Tar Heel. “Once he came on fire, I knew we were good.”

Bacot said he was convinced UNC wouldn’t lose the game. Why? Because he wouldn’t allow it. Even if he’ll be making a trip to the dentist tomorrow, the chipped teeth are only a reminder of this victory: a win in his final home game against Duke.

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Filipowski is the villain this rivalry needed

By Shelby Swanson

Something was missing. After a disappointing 2022-23 season that saw UNC get swept by Duke and miss the NCAA tournament, Saturday was set for a top-10 clash between the Tar Heels and Blue Devils — the first since 2019.

Yet, after the spoils that then-head coach Mike Krzyzewski’s final season was not the North Carolina fans, I couldn’t help but feel the absence of one key rivalry element heading into Saturday: hatred.

This Duke team, even the bluest of diehards, is generally likable. Gone are the Christian Laettner, JJ Redick and Grayson Allen.

First-year Jared McCann makes his silly TikToks with a bright smile on his face. Senior Jeremy Roach is even “cool” with UNC’s RJ Davis and Armando Bacot.

But with less than five minutes remaining in the game, I found my answer when Bacot went to work in the post and earned an and-one over Kyle Filipowski. Bacot turned around and hit the “too small” celebration. His teammates on the court followed suit. And then the benches erupted.

Did it matter that Filipowski was voted the preseason ACC Player of the Year? Based on how that play, and how the overall night, went — not just Bacot himself.

“At the end of the day, the ACC runs through me,” he said.

If Saturday night was any indication, Filipowski emerged as a bad seed. A dark horse for the Tar Heels and fans alike.

And if you’re wondering why Bacot was wearing a mouth guard reminiscent of middle-school braces for most of the game, that’s thanks to good ol’ Filipowski, who chipped in Bacot’s teeth: “He ran through my face,” Bacot said.

As the UNC men’s basketball team claimed a 93-84 victory against its rival Duke in the Dean E. Smith Center, UNC fans from across campus and Chapel Hill began rushing toward the intersection of Franklin and Columbia roads.

Resounding chants of “Tar Heels!” echoed through the crowd of an estimated 20,000.

Participants climbed stoplight poles, slid down telephone poles, and waved everything from flags to lighters on top of friends’ shoulders while they cheered.

Emily Barkdala, a senior at UNC, said she watched the game at Sup Dogs — a restaurant with easy access to Franklin Street. Watching the game on Franklin Street was exhilarating, Barkdala said. While she was not fully sure if UNC would win, she was just as excited as previous UNC-Duke games she’s watched.

As his Tar Heel victory, Barkdala said she sprinted to the street with her friend, who happened to be celebrating her birthday.

“There’s something about your best friend’s game, you know since you were a little bitty and then spending senior year together rushing Franklin,” Barkdala said. “It’s just sentimental, I’m not going to lie.”

Alex Carrasquillo, community manager for the Town of Chapel Hill, said he was in Franklin Street’s open space.

“Just getting shoved around, just in a mesh pit. It was so much fun.”

Outside of Raising Cane’s standing with his friends, Drew Babatunde, a student at N.C. A&T, cheered along with the crowd.

He said he was also watching the game at Sup Dogs and ran out to join the surge of people on their way toward the intersection. When describing the experience, he said he had to use one word: electric.

“It’s fun and if you want to have a good time, you got to come out to Franklin after a W,” he said. “Let’s go Tar Heels!”

Emmy Martin contributed reporting to this story.

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Victory Edition
Monday, February 5, 2024

Ingram’s energy carries UNC to win

By Lauren Rhodes

The game was heating up. UNC needed to bring that energy and knock down those shots and really get the crowd into it.” Bacot said. “I think that’s his role.”

For Ingram, all it comes down to is loving the game. Since coming to UNC, his mom Vera said there has been a big difference in the way he has been playing and the level of excitement he has for each and every game.

“He loves his teammates,” Vera told The DTH. “They get along very well. He talks about them all the time.”

He loves his family — all plus-50 members who showed up to the game, especially his Blue Devil sister who he has labeled one of his best friends.

But it was only after his 20th point that Ingram allowed himself to look at his family, pointing at Lauren to say “I told you so,” and let Vera to let her know he was happy with how he was playing.

And after the final buzzer had sounded, Harrison was eager to escape the postgame press conferences and rush Franklin Street alongside his loved ones.

He still didn’t know quite what he was going to say to them when he saw them, though.

“I’m going to see how they react first,” he said with a grin.

His mom, on the other hand, knew exactly what she was going to say to her son: “I love him and I’m so happy for him because I know how hard he’s worked.”

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Students and fans gathered downtown to celebrate a UNC win

By Lauren Rhodes

University Editor
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As the UNC men’s basketball team claimed a 93-84 victory against its rival Duke in the Dean E. Smith Center, UNC fans from across campus and Chapel Hill began rushing toward the intersection of Franklin and Columbia roads.

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Emmy Martin contributed reporting to this story.

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Fans celebrate on Franklin Street after the UNC men’s basketball team delisted Duke on Saturday.

It was just surreal, the amount of people here was just insane,” he said. “Just getting shoved around, just in a mesh pit. It was so much fun.”

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UNC junior forward Harrison Ingram (55), who head coach Hubert Davis has called the “glue” of his team, recorded a career-high five 3-pointers, as well as 13 rebounds and four steals. Ingram’s seventh double-double this season and 12th of his career helped lift UNC to its 93-84 win over Duke.
All day long

Although the tipoff of the UNC-Duke men’s basketball matchup took place at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, game day began 12 hours before for many students and fans. Students lined up at the Dean E. Smith Center as early as 7 a.m. for ESPN’s College GameDay and to get wristbands for Phase 1 of the student ticket lottery.

That afternoon, students stood in line again at the Smith Center according to their assigned phase. The venue was filled with palpable energy during the game — fans only pausing their cheers when the Tar Heels shot free throws. As Rece Davis described the atmosphere in the Smith Center during GameDay, “If you understand, no words are necessary. If you don’t, no words will suffice.”

With the Tar Heel victory, students raced downtown, flooding Franklin Street. Around 20,000 participants cheered, hugged their friends, chanted about the enemy down the road and climbed poles before continuing the celebrations elsewhere.

— Lara Crochik