DURHAM, N.C. — Saturday’s UNC-Duke rivalry game had the makings of a classic, with Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski prepared to grace his home floor for the final time.

The night was complete with a who’s who of stars, pregame and postgame ceremonies scheduled for Krzyzewski and a Duke team that featured a starting five of NBA prospects. But on Thursday, UNC head coach Hubert Davis made it clear that he took no interest in any of the extracurriculars.

“It’s North Carolina-Duke,” Davis said. “Great, let’s play.”

And that they did.

North Carolina left Durham with an improbable 94-81 win. Never mind the fact that the team was an 11.5-point underdog. Never mind that they came into the game unranked.

Saturday was supposed to be Krzyzewski’s night. Instead, it was Davis’.

A man who’d never led a squad into Cameron Indoor Stadium as a head coach was facing a man who was doing so for the 647th time. But that failed to faze North Carolina and its head coach.

The team showed an edge that it lacked in February at home, where it was throttled 87-67. North Carolina never led in Chapel Hill. On Saturday, it got the first bucket on the opening play with a dunk from junior forward Armando Bacot.

“When we came out and threw that first punch, I feel like we kind of stunned them,” Bacot said.

If a Duke player made a big play, sophomore guard Caleb Love or graduate forward Brady Manek were there to answer with a 3-pointer or inside shot. If the Blue Devils snagged a quick lead, it took little time for the Tar Heels to take one of their own.

While it’s easy to point to Bacot — who finished with a team-high 23 points — or sophomore guard R.J. Davis — who got inside for layups and assisted all night — the main reason for UNC’s upset victory was its preparation.

And that starts with Hubert Davis. The first-year head coach had the team watch an ESPN documentary centered on the Celtics-Lakers NBA rivalry in the 1980s. He showed them how the Lakers overcame a blowout loss in Game 1 of the 1985 NBA Finals to eventually win both Game 2 and the world championship.

“Keep your eyes straight ahead,” Davis told them. “Ignore all sideshow distractions.”

This narrow-minded focus guided UNC throughout the night. Four Tar Heels scored at least 20 points for the first time in program history, the team out-rebounded the Blue Devils by three and came away with a much-needed Quad-1 win.

At times this season, the team did not quite hold the same passion that Davis held.

“I’m always locked in,” Davis said with a smile. “That’s the problem with them, that I’m locked in all the time. I always tell them, ‘I’m there.’

The fiery nature Davis displayed all season rubbed off on each other while senior forward Leaky Black took his final two shots at the free-throw line with just seconds left in the game. Once the buzzer sounded, the players stormed the court in celebration of what they accomplished.

R.J. Davis commended the first-year coach for the way he got the team to compete.

“We know the work we put in,” R.J. Davis said. “H.D. coached a phenomenal game, and we played a great game.”

Like he’s done all season, Hubert Davis gave his team three keys for success going into Saturday’s game.

“We had to plant our feet, we had to stand our ground and we had to fight.”

Hubert Davis
North Carolina men’s basketball head coach

Junior Armando Bacot (5) dunks against Duke at Cameron Indoor Stadium on March 5, 2022. UNC won 94-81.

“Keep your eyes straight ahead,” Davis told them. “Ignore all sideshow distractions.”
Students rush Franklin after long wait

The Daily Tar Heel

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By Ethan Horton

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Students weren’t expecting the North Carolina men’s basketball team to win Saturday night, let alone that they would rush Franklin Street afterward. But, as UNC’s lead grew late in the game, people started leaving their TVs and lacing their shoes in anticipation of the tradition.

And they did just that after UNC’s win against Duke Saturday. Students ran to the corner of Franklin and Columbia streets to celebrate — clapping, setting fires and climbing street light poles.

According to preliminary estimates, as many as 15,000 people were on Franklin Street, Chapel Hill Community Safety Public Information Officer Alex Carrasquillo said.

UNC sophomore Elijah Mussie, who led chants in the center of the Franklin Street crowd, said the intersection changed quickly from its normal traffic to thousands of students.

“In 30 seconds, it changed from nobody there, regular cars, and then traffic cleared,” he said. “It was in the middle, and all I saw was just swarms of people coming. It was amazing.”

Chapel Hill police started closing the roads at 8:25 p.m. as the game ended. Carrasquillo said police and Town staff were already prepared to close the road for the win, as is standard practice.

Christopher Law, a UNC student who was holding a street sign from Duke’s campus in the crowd, said participating in the celebration was something he had dreamed about since his childhood.

“Taking part in the UNC traditions is the best thing I think I could do here,” Law said. “My favorite part of the night was singing the alma mater with my friends and the people around us, holding the sign and enjoying the Carolina spirit.”

In February 2021, celebrations on Franklin Street after a rivalry win were cut short by police due to COVID-19 protocols, and more than 100 students who participated were referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

In March 2021, after another UNC win over Duke, fewer students gathered, and the intersection only closed for five minutes. UNC sophomore Blaise Shaver said this year was his first experience rushing Franklin Street — despite two UNC wins over Duke last year — due to the pandemic.

“I was like, ‘Wait, a minute, I have to rush Franklin,’” Shaver said.

Sophomore Lexi Freas was waving the flag with friends off an off-campus apartment. She said and her friends ran to the intersection and tried to get as close to the center of the crowd as possible.

“I felt like a kid in a candy store,” she said. “I’ve been to a lot of concerts that were nowhere near as intense as that.”

The first recorded rush of Franklin Street was in 1957, following UNC’s national championship game win against Kansas — and students have been doing so for the past four decades when the Tar Heels win national championships or defeat Duke.

Mussie said long-standing traditions like rushing Franklin Street are part of what defines the University.

“UNC is UNC because of the traditions and the people,” he said. “And that right there, you brought both tradition and people together for an amazing time, and a huge upset game. It doesn’t get any more Carolina than that.”

Sophomore music major Chris Law wielded a Duke University Road sign on Franklin Street after North Carolina men’s basketball defeated Duke, 94-81, on Saturday, March 5.

Students and community members rush Franklin Street on Saturday, March 5, after North Carolina basketball’s final regular season game against Duke.

Column: Farewell tour gets send-off it deserves

By PJ Morales

Sports Editor

He could not have planned it any better.

Right after a disappointing 2020-21 season that saw his Blue Devils miss March Madness for the first time since 1995, head coach Mike Krzyzewski’s final year would be the one to turn it around. A star-studded molding class highlighted by unicorn Paolo Banchero, paired with an already-stacked roster highlighted by McDonald’s All-American center Mark Williams, would give the 75-year-old another shot at winning it all.

And then, on June 2, 2021, Krzyzewski announced that he would finally hang up his hat and retire at the end of the season. With his replacement, Jon Scheyer, ready to go, Krzyzewski was ready to do his coach the one last time and take in the ensuing media circus. He really couldn’t have planned his farewell tour any better.

And for most of the season, the tour carried on smoothly. Despite some losses, the Blue Devils never fell out of the AP Top 10, and Duke cruised its way to the ACC regular season title match, clinching it before its schedule even ended. Heading into the final week of the regular season, articles and video galore poured in from across the sports media world, giving Coach K all of his flowers, fanfare and more.

The final stop of that tour, his final game at Cameron Indoor Stadium, would be the grand finale with all the bells and whistles — a College GameDay special, a mass of former Duke players returning to honor his skipper and a postgame ceremony to see all for all his legacy before the Cameron Crazies.

All he had to do was defeat their unranked rivals, the North Carolina Tar Heels, something he had done just a month prior, and by 20 points no less. Easy... or not.

Instead, the upset-minded Tar Heels had other ideas, punching the Blue Devils in the mouth early and pulling ahead late for a 94-81 win, Hubert Davis’ first over Duke and far-and-away the most important of his rookie coaching campaign.

That sweet farewell tour had been soured, and as Krzyzewski silenced fandom during his postgame speech, his face showed it.

A huge upset against a top-five Duke team in their territory, the last victory UNC would ever be able to earn over its most prominent villain of all time — for Tar Heel fans, the game was rif with reasons to rejoice.

But want you to ask yourself, what makes this win that much more meaningful? For me, it’s obvious.

Think back to Roy.

Every villain needs a hero, and for 18 years that hero was Roy Williams. Those western North Carolina roots, that southern drawl and that attitude made him exactly the man to take on the flashy Northern coach over in Durham.

And in 2021, after a disappointing season where a Williams-led Tar Heel lost in the first round of the NCAA Tournament for the first time ever, when that good night finally came for him, Williams went gently.

No fass or fuss, no pomp and circumstance — just a surprise April Fool’s Day announcement, a press conference and an alumnae luncheon that he was no longer “the right man for the job.”

We didn’t know that season was the last we’d see of Roy. It just wasn’t the way to go out for Coach K in UNC history was supposed to go out — quietly, somberly, monstrously. It was everything Krzyzewski didn’t want for himself.

Krzyzewski’s been riding highs all season. He had his own ACC reunions, adoring feature stories in newspapers nationwide, big wins over ranked teams and a thrashing of his rivals in their home arena. A final win in Cameron Indoor against those same rivals would just be the icing on that cake.

The farewell tour was approaching its finale — a final K so desperately wanted on his jersey. But Davis, the hardworking handicapped successor of Roy, wouldn’t allow that to happen.

In defeat, the fass was sealed by failure, the horribles and parody running by the string of better defeat. You want to know what makes this win that much sweeter? Roy may not have gotten his proper ending, but Krzyzewski got exactly the one he deserved.

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**RECAP**

**Tar Heels write their own storybook ending**

The 94-81 win turned the tale around against a No. 4 Duke team

By Hunter Nelson  
Assistant Sports Editor  

DURHAM, N.C. — Just when the storybook ending seemed inevitable, the Tar Heels decided to craft their own epic.

In UNC's shocking 94-81 win over No. 4 Duke on Saturday, perhaps the final margin suggests complete dominance from a side looking to avenge an embarrassing defeat just 28 days earlier. Instead, the game was arguably won in a span of four minutes, when UNC went on a 14-4 run that would never relinquish.

"We knew they were going to come in fired up, but all we had to do was put in one simple thing that we knew we were going to win the fight or win the game," junior forward Armando Bacot said.

As former Duke players, celebrities and thousands that parted ways with a fraction of their life savings to watch Mike Krzyzewski — the guy, you know, with the most wins in the history of the sport — coach his last home basketball game, each timely Blue Devil bucket proved a collective sigh of relief inside the hallowed annals of Cameron Indoor Stadium.

When AJ Griffin, one of the several future NBA players at Krzyzewski's disposal and star of the previous matchup, nailed a three to give Duke a five-point lead over North Carolina with 10:32 remaining, the Blue Devils had prepared to deliver the knockout punch and get the party started.

But to those wearing the lighter shade of blue, the war — not the celebration — had only just begun.

"We had to plant our feet, we had to stand our ground and we had to fight," head coach Hubert Davis said. "If we did those three things, it would put us in a position to do something not a lot of people expected us to do."

With the team down five, UNC turned to one of the rivalry's earliest protagonists. Sophomore guard Caleb Love, the one-time Blue Devil wannabe who exploded for 40 points in the two matchups last season, found himself open at the top of the key for a triple. It didn't matter that he was only shooting 5-13 to that point — his budding confidence took over as he let it fly.

Swish. On the ensuing possession, fellow sophomore guard R.J. Davis received the ball in transition and weaved his way into the paint for a layup to tie the game.

And finally, on the next two trips, UNC reverted back to the basics and allowed Bacot and graduate forward Brady Manek to finish inside. It was 65-61, North Carolina, as the home crowds were drowned out by the giddy cheers and thunderous claps from the visiting sideline.

"It was one of those games where they felt the pressure and we just kept pushing," Manek said.

Just as the saga seemed solidified in the 'Tar Heels' favor, the Blue Devils flexed a talent that clinched them the ACC regular season title earlier in the week. Forward Paolo Banchero — a projected top-3 pick in the upcoming NBA Draft — ratted home a jumper to cut the lead to just one with a little over six minutes remaining. It was Davis' turn to deliver another blow from behind the arc.

"UNC's primary weapon when the teams offensive flow was stagnant early on, he calmly elevated and let it fly from the wing."

"It was all about mental toughness," Davis said. "We came on each other to make big plays and that's what we were able to do. It was just a full-energized game that I loved being a part of."

As the game went on, a hero cannot be triumphant without slaying the most imposing challenger. For the Tar Heels, that enemy was former rivalry for Wendell Moore Jr., who made a late three to once again give his team life.

But after years of hanging his head in defeat after previous losses to the Blue Devils, Bacot officially knocked down his literal Blue Demons by throwing down a two-handed slam to put the nail in the coffin.

"I wasn't trying to lose. I wasn't excited until the buzzer ran off because you can never count them off, and I didn't want to go through that again." Armando Bacot.  

**PREVIEW**

**Three teams may face UNC in first tournament game**

Sophomore guard RJ Davis (4) stares at his opponent at the game against Virginia in Chapel Hill on Jan. 8, 2022.

As the No. 3 seed, UNC can play Virginia, Louisville or Georgia Tech in the ACC Tournament to build their resume, and will open play on Wednesday against the winner of Louisville and Georgia Tech.

As head coach Tony Bennett took over the program in 2009, Virginia has built its reputation on stout defense, which has carried the team for the majority of the season. Although the Cavaliers are ranked among the bottom-25 teams in the nation with 63.6 points per game, they lead the ACC with only 4.9 points allowed.

With an 18-2 record, the Cavaliers have won five out of their last nine games, including a last-second victory at Duke and a double-digit victory at home over Miami. Although East Carolina transfer Jayden Gardner leads the team in scoring, Virginia is paced by the backcourt tandem of Reece Beekman and Kliko Clark, who each average over four assists per game.

In early January, UNC ran away from Virginia in a 74-68 win in the Smith Center to map a seven-game losing streak to the Cavaliers.

Louisville (No. 11 seed)

Playing the last nine games with an interim coach after the firing of Chris Mack, the Cardinals have played their way to the No. 8 seed in the ACC Tournament. Since Mack was fired on Jan. 26, Louisville has gone 1-9 with each loss coming by an average of 13.4 points this season. After the pandemic put a halt to the 2020 rendition, the team stumbled in the first round with a loss to No. 13 seed Ohio last season.

For the first time since 2013, the Cavaliers seem to be outsiders in the NCAA Tournament field. They'll need to perform well in the conference tournament to build their resume and potentially give themselves momentum before the NCAA Tournament kicks off.

Despite the recent struggles, Louisville played UNC close in both outings. The first went into overtime, but North Carolina prevailed with a 90-83 win. The second ended with a 74-69 win, a win that was a national championship game, so I'm glad to say I was a part of it," Bacot said.

Twitter: @hunternelson_1

**Georgia Tech (No. 14 seed)**

Since winning the conference tournament last year, matters quickly headed south for Josh Pastner's squad.

After losing key players Joe Alvarado and reigning ACC Player of the Year Moses Wright in the offseason, the Yellow Jackets stumbled to a 12-19 record, including an underwhelming 5-15 mark in the ACC. Before defeating Boston College in Saturday's season finale, the team had dropped seven of their last eight games.

Last year's team featured one of the most effective defenses in the country, but the numbers have been quite the contrary this season, as the Yellow Jackets rank 281st in the nation in offensive rating. The defense has also been mediocre at best, allowing 70.3 points per game.

In the two matchups between the teams this season, UNC was both games by a combined 40 points. The Tar Heels were favored in both, as well as each of the past 16 games. Georgia Tech's leading scorer Michael Devoe was neutralized by UNC's senior wing Leaky Black and shot just 7-18 over both contests.

Twitter: @hunternelson_1
The Tar Heels came for one thing Saturday night: an upset win against the heavily favored, top-five Duke Blue Devils.

It didn’t matter that it was Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski’s last game in Cameron Indoor Stadium, or that 96 of his former players were in attendance to see their college coach off.

Under the brightest of lights, in front of the craziest of Cameron Crazies, the Tar Heels shocked the world.