RISING FROM THE ASHES

After fizzling last year, UNC’s new young sparks aim to keep the rivalry’s old flame burning.
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UNC rivalry is a family affair for UNC’s legacies

By Macy Meyer  
Senior Writer  
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UNC head coach Roy Williams has said he never looks ahead when it comes to the men’s basketball schedule. He prepares for who his team is playing next, and that’s it — even when it comes to what most people regard as the greatest rivalry in college basketball.

“I’m telling you the gospel truth, I have no freakin’ idea who we play next and I never look down the schedule,” he said at a press conference on Jan. 22. Maybe the famous Duke-UNC rivalry game is the same old, same old for the longtime coach — but for the legacy players on the men’s basketball team, it’s a moment some of them have been thinking about for almost their entire lives.

It’s more than just a date circled on the calendar. It’s more than just an event that will flood millions of TVs across the nation. It’s even more than taking part in a historic feud that dates back to the 1920s. For legacy athletes, it’s a family affair.

“Since I knew about Carolina and about my dad, I knew about the rivalry,” first-year guard Creighton Lebo said. “It was one of those games we definitely always had to watch. Our whole family would sit down and cheer on the Heels.”

On Saturday, Lebo will step onto the court in Cameron Indoor Stadium for the first time in his collegiate career, 32 years after his father, Jeff, graduated from UNC. Lebo can’t even recall his first memory of the rivalry. It’s just always been part of the 6-foot-1 point guard’s life — and it’s a game he’s been waiting for since he decided to attend UNC.

While Lebo is preparing for the strangeness of a noiseless Cameron Indoor on Feb. 6, he still made sure to talk to his dad about what he should expect for his first experience against the nearby rival. “He said it was one of the most intense games he’s played in his whole entire career,” Lebo said. “Everyone was trying to win that game more than any game of the year. He loved playing in that atmosphere, loved playing in Cameron Indoor.”

For redshirt senior guard K.J. Smith, the Duke-UNC rivalry game is an exciting reminder of when his father etched his name into Smith Center history. It was early January 1986 when the Blue Devils made the short trip from Durham, in what would be the first night two teams would ever face off in the historic arena. Kenny Smith had a special goal in mind going into the rivalry game: he wanted to score the first bucket in the Smith Center.

While Kenny would eventually have to settle for notching the Smith Center’s first assist by feeding a pass to center Warren Martin — his first of many before he ultimately graduated from UNC as the school’s leader in career assists — he wanted to score the first bucket in the Smith Center.

“Everything felt so surreal,” Smith said. “That first Carolina-Duke game, I was just sweating through my suit. It gives me chills just thinking about it. The Smith Center with 22,000 people filled up, screaming and chanting. Those moments before the tip, you’re really like, ‘Wow, this is the biggest rivalry in sports, and I’m a part of it.’”

Cameron Indoor won’t be rocking with fans or buzzing with the excitement of thousands of Cameron Crazies, nor will big-name personalities like former President Barack Obama and director Spike Lee grace the sidelines. But there will still be two important onlookers for Lebo and Smith: their fathers.

Twitter: @macyemeyer
UNC students rush Franklin Street after UNC defeated Duke on Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2019.

Basketball world.

Capel's confidence wasn't shared by all. Yes, North Carolina was the No. 4 team in the country. But these were the Blue Devils, themselves ranked No. 2 nationally, we're talking about. The team that was 5-0 in its last five trips against UNC.

Point to the most, this is Cameron Indoor Stadium we're talking about, a place where Carolina blue descends to die. The ‘lion’s den’ as Capel put it.

Jay Williams 3-pointer, Battier 3-pointer. An 12-2 spurt soon after halftime sliced the lead to two, then Williams gave Duke the lead with a jumper at the 14:21 mark.

That was about the time that Capel remembers the floor literally shaking underneath him. Now it was him and his teammates about 9,000 people with blue paint on their faces.

In Cameron, man, you can’t look over your shoulder; he said. Coach can’t help you.

Here, though, is where Capel credits Doherty for getting the game in his players’ hands.

For letting Fitz, who was 7 of 13 from the floor, get loose. For letting Capel do a little bit of everything.

For letting Carolina control the paint on both ends.

He prepared us, he said, but he also got out of the way.

Capel said.

Fans searching for rivalry hype amid COVID-19

By Hunter Nelson

sports@dailytarheel.com

Five lead changes later, the Tar Heels had done enough to escape together an 88-80 lead with seconds to play. Just one more stop meant a non-upset upset over the No. 2 team in the country, the nation’s longest winning streak preserved and a huge rivalry win for a rookie Tar Heel head coach.

Doherty

The raging, loaded Franklin Street and 21,750 fans jumping around are common sights the Tar Heels have been used to get to have to get used to have with many with how many with many with how many with how many with how many with how many with how many with how many with how many with how many with. Harry Bronson from Chapel Hill to Chapel Hill.

I actually grew up a Duke fan, so I feel like I don’t hate them as much as I would have if COVID wasn’t here, Roshan Virdhlaham, a first-year from Cary, North Carolina, said.

While first-year students may not have the experience of victims of unfortunate circumstances, the same sentiment can be applied to this year’s senior class – as some are somber over the likely prospect of missing their last hurrah against the Blue Devils when the teams play in the Smith Center on March 6.

Phillip Choi, a senior from Charlotte, said he has lived Carolina blue since he was 5 years old, so he vividly recalls spectating in Cameron for the first time in 2018. He was flooded with emotions when he made his way up near the rafters with a phase five ticket, which he still keeps, in hand.

I thought we were extremely

Together and we were tough, Capel, UNC’s then-junior forward, said in a phone interview. And those are two things you have to be to win in Cameron Indoor Stadium.

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I almost started crying, man, Choi said, of him making both were closer to

No, he said. But if the wind were blowing a different direction in Cameron Indoor that night, it wouldn’t have been a very, very different story.

Chris Duhon was never a second he. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance. Now, he’ll always have his last chance to be in the stands on his last chance.

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Capel said.

With the lack of an authentic on-campus experience, though, some first-year students have acknowledged the difficulties of getting fully acclimated with the rivalry and all of its lore. I really do think a lot of us would have more to say if there were a season win in his first year on the job.

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The Daily Tar Heel

Friday, February 5, 2021

2021 Rivalry Edition

Three keys to 2021’s first UNC-Duke matchup

By Jared McMasters
Sports Editor

It's that special time of year. With UNC-Duke game right around the corner, all bets will be off in the first matchup between these two teams since the pandemic halted sports last year. Ahead of the rivalry contest, check out these three facets of the game that could play a big role in deciding a winner.

Watch out for Goldwire

It’s no secret that the Tar Heels have a turnover problem. First-year guard Caleb Love and others have cleaned things up a bit recently, but that hasn’t stopped North Carolina falling to No. 265 in the nation in turnovers per game. And those numbers don’t bode well for a squad that hasn’t even caught wind of the toughest stretch of its schedule yet.

With 11 national championships and Blue Devils are unranked — and Blue Devils are unranked — there's a temptation to say that this year’s UNC-Duke games is an instant classic, but that looking back, all those things — without the thousands of people in Cameron Indoor Stadium. Tar Heel fans can scream at other kids their age to future generations in history books but to those of us going through it today.

UNC,Duke unranked, ahead of rivalry game

By Ryan Wilcox
Senior Writer

They were always there. There, when an eight-point deficit vanished in 17 seconds. There, when a half-court buzzer-beater determined the Game of the Century just one overtime just didn’t cut it. There, when a 3-pointer over the outstretched arms of a 7-footer silenced aлен Dean E. Smith Center crowd.

The reality of UNC-Duke basketball during COVID-19

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COVID-19’s instability curbing young UNC, Duke teams

By Mary Mac Porter
Senior Writer
sports@dailytarheel.com

Forty-five years.
For 45 years, the North Carolina and Duke women’s basketball teams have driven the 10-mile down Tobacco Road to compete in one of the greatest rivalries in sports.

Since the 1975-76 season, the Tar Heels and Blue Devils have suited up in their signature uniforms — Carolina blue for the Tar Heels and Duke blue for the Blue Devils — and walked onto the court to the screams of huge crowds to face their neighboring rivals. The UNC-Duke rivalry is a Tar Heel tradition, just like drinking from the Old Well on the first day of classes, climbing the Bell Tower, or the Carolina-Duke rivalry before coming to UNC?

Jackie Manuel reflects on Duke rivalry, Redick

By Zachary Cain
Assistant Sports Editor
sports@dailytarheel.com

Jackie Manuel played basketball at North Carolina from 2004-05, winning a national title and helping lead the Tar Heels over Duke in his first trip to Cameron Indoor Stadium. Now, he serves as the director of player personnel, development and recruiting operations for UNC women’s basketball.

As someone who grew up in Florida, what was your experience with the rivalry before coming to UNC?

Jackie Manuel: Growing up in Florida, it wasn’t a whole lot of basketball games, it was a bunch of football games and that was always on TV, or the one rivalry that was always on TV from a basketball standpoint was the Carolina-Duke game.

At a young age, I was able to turn on the TV and just see that excitement behind the game, the build-up and the talented players that played in those games and ended up playing in the NBA.

AF Top 25 poll — few teams have true first-year players in their rotation, fewer still with a first-year who starts. Gonzaga tops the list with four true freshmen. Return to the game card, it was the first time that’s happened since 1982. Neither team has anything to be remotely concerned about, and with UNC’s much tougher backcourt rotation, it’s looking like there’s a possibility that the two youthful teams could make a matchup on the first time since 1973.

So, far it’s not hard to call North Carolina’s head-first dive into the one-and-done era a disappointment. Although UNC sits at five games over .500, it has yet to claim anything more than a moral victory over an unranked opponent. Without experienced playmakers, the Tar Heels are in danger of finishing with more turnovers than assists for the first time in Roy Williams’ tenure.

It was like, Man, this is what it feels like, I want to do it again. This is what it feels like to win this game, to compete in this environment and to know that we have brought rights in our community.

You protected J.J. Redick, one of the biggest players in college basketball, so what was that matchup like?

J.R.: I was really hoping for J.J. Redick to have a good game before they played us, then we would have a chance after they played us. It was just my competitive spirit — I wanted everyone in the game. I wanted everyone in the game to see that there’s a difference between the person that’s guarding you before this game, myself and the person that’s guarding you after this game.

What’s your best memory of playing in the rivalry?

J.R.: The number one memory was winning at home in 2005. And the second is the Speedo guy.

Can you explain the Speedo guy?

J.R.: One of the Cameron Crashers came in with a coat on, and as I got to the free-throw line, he took the coat off, and he was behind the backboard (in a Speedo) as I was shooting, and he started doing his dance or whatever he was doing and distracted me to the point where I lost my concentration and missed both free throws.

In the years since you’ve graduated, what’s your experience to watch that rivalry?

J.R.: I feel the same way I felt when I played. If there was a camera inside my home when that game is on, everyone would see my emotions. They’d see the rollercoaster as the game goes on, I still want our team, players and coach (Roy) Williams to be successful against Duke, just like when I was a player.

Twitter: @jchredick
In the buildup to this season’s first rendition of the UNC-Duke men’s basketball game, it’s no secret that UNC has had its fair share of struggles. But if there’s been one consistent plus, it’s the improvement shown by the ‘Tar Heels’ big men. Many thought this year’s bigs would be commanded by the 2020 Preseason ACC Player of the Year: senior Garrison Brooks. But Brooks’ numbers have fallen. Meanwhile, Duke’s only real center, first-year Mark Williams, has only registered more than eight in-game minutes four times, averaging just 2.7 points and 2.7 rebounds per game. Granted, he played well against Georgia Tech, recording six points, six rebounds and a steal, but there’s just not enough sample size to determine if those numbers will hold.

Instead, this year’s Tar Heel frontcourt has been spearheaded by burgeoning sophomore Armando Bacot. Bacot leads the starters with both 11.9 points per game and 65 percent shooting — vast improvements from last season. His 65 percent shooting leads the conference.

Bacot and Brooks have also had some help in the form of a couple of gigantic five-star recruits: first-years Day’Ron Sharpe and Walker Kessler. Sharpe’s defensive acumen is apparent, coming joint-second on the team in blocks and leading in rebounds per game. Kessler, meanwhile, has struggled for minutes four times, averaging just 2.7 points and 2.7 rebounds per game. Granted, he played well against Georgia Tech, recording six points, six rebounds and a steal, but there’s just not enough sample size to determine if those numbers will hold.

Beyond that, Duke’s options are sparse. 6-foot-6 flame thrower Matthew Hurt is Johnson’s height and weighs 15 more pounds, but he typically prefers to score from mid-range and beyond. Meanwhile, Duke’s only real center, first-year Mark Williams, has only registered more than eight in-game minutes four times, averaging just 2.7 points and 2.7 rebounds per game. Granted, he played well against Georgia Tech, recording six points, six rebounds and a steal, but there’s just not enough sample size to determine if those numbers will hold.

If the Tar Heels can find a way to effectively shut down Hurt and Johnson while scoring consistent buckets in the paint on the other end, that might be the formula to running out of Cameron Indoor Stadium at game’s end with a win in hand.

Deep UNC frontcourt aims to overpower Duke

By PJ Morales
Assistant Sports Editor
sports@dailytarheel.com

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Twitter: @pjdaman12

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Help Us Build the Future of The Daily Tar Heel.
Baseball is a game of moments, and none are as impactful as those between the shoulders of Kerwin Walton and Leaky Black.

Since his return from an ACL injury, Harris has been a spark for the Blue Devils. The senior is averaging 6.8 points per game and 4.7 rebounds per game. His presence on the court has helped the Blue Devils move up in the rankings.

With neither team having a collection of standout starters, expect the benches to play a key role when the Tar Heels and Blue Devils meet on Feb. 6.

Twitter: @zachycrain

**Bench units could be deciding factor in UNC-Duke tilt**

Day’Ron Sharpe, Jordan Goldwire are players to watch off the bench

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### UNC

- **7.7** Day’Ron Sharpe rebounds a game
- **18** RJ Davis 3-pointers
- **16** Jordan Goldwire blocks
- **15** Andrew Platek assists

### Duke

- **56** Mark Williams’ field goal percentage
- **31** Mark Williams blocks
- **10** Williams blocks
- **48** Goldwire assists

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**UNC**

- **7.7** Day’Ron Sharpe rebounds a game
- **18** RJ Davis 3-pointers
- **16** Jordan Goldwire blocks
- **15** Andrew Platek assists

**Duke**

- **56** Mark Williams’ field goal percentage
- **31** Mark Williams blocks
- **10** Williams blocks
- **48** Goldwire assists

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** UNC parents.**
Question marks surround Duke's play since three-week break

By Jeremiah Holloway
Senior Writer
sports@dailytarheel.com

The UNC-Duke rivalry might be foreign to some college athletes from outside North Carolina, but for international athletes, it's a whole different experience.

Senior midfielder Eva Smolenaars (21) dribbles the ball during a game against Duke on Friday, February 5, 2021.

"I grew up watching the Duke-UNC rivalry," said Petra Holek, a senior athlete from the Czech Republic.

"It was there where she got her first taste of the rivalry," Smolenaars said.

"I've been fans of those two teams," Holek said. "When the Illinois men's basketball team played against the Duke Blue Devils, it was the most exciting thing I've ever seen."

"That was the most wild thing," he said. "I've been fans of those two teams, and I was so surprised by their performance in the game."
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Tar Heels bringing first-year firepower to Durham

4 McDonald’s All-Americans
3 First-years playing 20 minutes per game
3 Five-star recruits
635 Points from UNC’s five rotation first-years
16.2 Rebounds per game
150 Assists

3 Kerwin Walton’s 3-point percentage
42.4 First-years playing 20 minutes per game
150 Assists

150 Assists

40.9 Points per game for Duke’s five rotation freshmen
14 Jalen Johnson’s blocks
53.9 Jalen Johnson’s shooting percentage
13.5 Points per game for DJ Steward
6 Home wins

New crop of freshmen set to defend home court
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The only collection of Duke merchandise in the world that actually comes to you direct from Duke University.
A starting 5 of the best Blue Devil performances vs. UNC

By Max Rego

Assistant Blue Zone Editor

Since the first meeting between the two in 1920, Duke and North Carolina have given college basketball an exhaustive list of unforgettable moments. On the Blue Devils' end, the tally of unforgettable individual performances goes on and on. That is why the task of creating a starting five made up of some of the most iconic performances by a Duke player in the rivalry's history is daunting. We tried our best, though, without fail, this is a starting lineup of the most memorable individual performances by a Blue Devil in Duke-North Carolina history.

Guard: Nolan Smith, Feb. 9, 2011 (Cameron Indoor Stadium)

When Duke went into the halftime locker room trailing 43-29, things seemed dire for the defending national champions. Thanks to some rallying of the troops by head coach Mike Krzyzewski during the break and a little bit of Nolan Smith magic, however, the Blue Devils stormed back to stun the Tar Heels. Smith was utterly brilliant in the second half, scoring 22 of his career-high 34 points in 26 minutes—enough to lift the Blue Devils to a 67-62 win in Cameron Indoor Stadium. Duke's win secured what was then its largest second-half comeback in 52 years.

Forward: Shane Battier, March 4, 2001 (Dean E. Smith Center)

This performance might be best remembered for Battier's incredible 35-foot buzzer-beater—in the second half, on a Duke team that was playing for the ACC championship—out of nowhere. Battier's shot was remarkable in its own right. Battier racked up 25 points, 11 rebounds, five blocks and four steals en route to the win. It was a near-perfect game, and it was hard to figure out. So it's hard to figure that out.

But yes, it'll definitely be different. It's the same for both teams, obviously. It shows the kind of people that are fans are, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than it is for a normal game. It's always more pronounced, with Duke-Carolina. Usually you walk into that building and the atmosphere—there's a certain something that's there, and you can feel it, is, but for the Duke-Carolina game it's always hotter in there than...
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A historical look at the hostility in the Duke-UNC rivalry

By Shane Smith

Two dependable blue-bloods with iconic histories, now unraveled and scrambling for a once-seeingly guaranteed berth in the NCAA tournament. Tickets to a rivalry matchup in Cameron Indoor Stadium that are annually as expensive as a used car, not even on the market amid the pandemic.

This year’s Duke vs. North Carolina showdown isn’t the one we’re used to. It’s hard to imagine this game without the fanfare that comes with the greatest rivalry in college sports, but it isn’t hard to understand why the game feels so different with the state of the Tobacco Road rivalry over the past decade.

The Tar Heels will always be the circled game on Duke’s schedule, and when it comes, there’s animosity toward the other shade of blue in everyone’s daily lives, masked by southern hospitality. And you can’t argue with a competition where over the last 108 meetings, each team has won 54 times each. The Blue Devils and Tar Heels have had at least one ranked team in every matchup since 1961...until now.

A strugging, young Duke team and a struggling, young Carolina team face off without all the usual storylines, just the name brand of the rivalry to prop itself up in 2021. Does this year’s iterations remotely resemble the usual hype?

Don’t be mistaken, this rivalry certainly spawned out of hate. With the schools separated by just eight miles and their familiarity between the schools.

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Don’t be mistaken, this rivalry certainly spawned out of hate. With the schools separated by just eight miles and their familiarity between the schools.
The Tar Heels' interior tandem are not the greatest on the court. The sturdy paint duo are not the greatest, but they always seem to be in the right place to wrestle loose balls from opponents after missed shots. Their tenacity on the glass has propelled North Carolina to third in the nation in total rebounds per game with 42.8, so they will be a difference-maker in Saturday’s game. The dynamic that Roach and Steward have on the court when they’re both playing well would be undeniable. Becky Hammon’s improvement with the ball could be extremely useful against Duke.

Bacot and Brooks’ inside skills have allowed the duo to combine for 22.4 points and 14.7 rebounds per game, giving the Blue Devils trouble last season as well. There’s no doubt Bacot is hungry for his first ever rivalry win and a victory for Brooks would put him a step closer to finishing his career with a winning record against Duke.

On the other end of the floor, Hurt is not the biggest or strongest defender, so he will need to maintain good positioning to avoid surrendering offensive rebounds and easy paint baskets. Bacot and Brooks, both 6-foot-10 and 240 pounds, could each pose matchup problems for the skinner Hurt down low simply based on measurables.

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The sturdy paint duo are not the greatest athletes, but they always seem to be in the right place to wrestle loose balls from opponents after missed shots. Their tenacity on the glass has propelled North Carolina to third in the nation in total rebounds per game with 42.8, so Duke will have to grind for any second-chance opportunities.

Bacot rarely relinquishes opportunities for putback points, as his 65% shot conversion rate stands nearly 20 percentage points higher than the Tar Heels’ next-best scorer. Roach has put up decent numbers in many games, and is averaging 8.8 points, 2.4 rebounds and 2.6 assists for the season. The dynamic that Roach and Steward have on the court when they’re both playing well would be undeniable. Becky Hammon’s improvement with the ball could be extremely useful against the Tar Heels this weekend.

Mark Williams’ sheer height has made him a fascinating player on the Duke roster this season. While he didn’t see significant minutes at the beginning of the year, he has progressively seen more playing time in recent contests. His size could be extremely useful on the defensive end for the Blue Devils.

Duke’s bench hasn’t been particularly notable this season. The majority of Blue Devil points have been scored by Matthew Hurt, DJ Steward and Jalen Johnson. That being said, there are a few players that likely won’t be on the floor at the start of Saturday’s game but could make a difference later in the evening.

Jeremy Roach, for example, hasn’t been a consistent starter for the Blue Devils this season but is the team’s fourth-highest scorer. Roach has put up decent numbers in many games, and is averaging 8.8 points, 2.4 rebounds and 2.6 assists for the season. The dynamic that Roach and Steward have on the court when they’re both playing well would be undeniable. Becky Hammon’s improvement with the ball could be extremely useful against the Tar Heels this weekend.

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Backcourt

By Nithin Ragunathan
Associate Sports Editor

The Duke-North Carolina rivalry has extremely rich guard history, from the likes of legends such as Michael Jordan and Bobby Hurley to more recent NBA drafters such as Tre Jones and Cole Anthony. While this year’s guards may not stack up to those names, it’ll certainly be a competitive matchup in the backcourt Saturday.

For one, Jordan Goldwire has made a name for himself as a pesky defender and an overall scrappy player. Amongst ACC players, he only trails Georgia Tech’s Jose Alvarado in steals with an impressive 2.4 per game.

Goldwire will leave everything he has out on the floor given the sheer amount of time he’s spent in Durham. There’s no doubt that Goldwire will leave everything he has out on the floor in his final North Carolina home game as a Blue Devil.

Meanwhile, DJ Steward looks to continue his solid rookie campaign with a memorable first game against North Carolina. Steward has gained Krzyzewski’s trust, starting all but two regular season games. The Chicago native has been a virtual lock to score double figures on a nightly basis, doing so in all but three appearances this season.

If Steward is able to get to the line consistently, the Tar Heels could be in for a long night. Not every freshman can make around 0.3% from the free throw line with the volume of fouls that Steward draws. The Whitney Young product is also one of Duke’s best long-range shooters, so North Carolina head coach Roy Williams will make sure to impart some caution to his players when it comes to guarding Steward away from the basket.

In the Tar Heel backcourt, freshman Caleb Love currently averages 10.3 points along with 3.1 assists per game. Love’s best game of the season came Jan. 20 against Wake Forest, in which he put up a career-high 20 points and shot 7-of-12 from the field. However, the freshman guard has proven to be quite inconsistent from beyond the arc. He’s only shooting 22.2% from three on the season, a weakness Duke can easily exploit. Look for the Blue Devils to sag off Love when he’s out in space Saturday.

After RJ Davis opened the first nine games of the season starting at the second guard spot, Williams has looked exclusively to Kerwin Walton to fill that role since the start of the new year. Walton is averaging 10.1 points per game across his eight starts, a significant uptick from his production as a bench player. He’s also shooting 42.4% from three for the season, so Duke must make sure that it guards Walton tight on the perimeter or he will make them pay.

Wings

By Brennan Hurd
Staff Writer

Duke’s wing play has been nothing short of a roller coaster throughout the season, plagued by injuries, inconsistent shooting and foul trouble. But the Blue Devils will need a quality game from the likes of Jalen Johnson and Wendell Moore Jr. if they wish to knock off North Carolina Saturday.

Johnson, who was named ACC Freshman of the Week last week, has been a key component of Duke’s recent wins. Averaging over 15 points, seven rebounds and three assists a game, the Blue Devil has recorded five double-digit scoring performances in the 10 games he has played this season. However, his struggles from the free throw line with the volume of fouls that Steward makes has been a virtual lock to score double figures on a nightly basis, doing so in all but three appearances this season.

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Charles Yurk | Associate Photography Editor

Jordan Goldwire leads the ACC in assist-to-turnover ratio at 3.7-to-1.4. He’s spent in Durham. There’s no doubt that head coach Mike Krzyzewski feels is reliable for another year of Duke domination, they the Blue Devils had Black’s number, and finished a combined 6-of-17 shooting for 15 points, and failed to amass more than seven rebounds in either game. Last year, the Blue Devils had Black’s number, and for another year of Duke domination, they must continue to do the same.

A confident Black could spell trouble for this young Duke team, so keeping him cold from the 3-point line will be vital. In his two games against Duke a year ago, Black finished a combined 6-of-17 shooting for 15 points, and failed to amass more than seven rebounds in either game. Last year, the Blue Devils had Black’s number, and for another year of Duke domination, they must continue to do the same.

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Q&A: Jay Bilas discusses Tobacco Road rivalry

By Evan Kolin
Sports Editor

Jay Bilas has been involved in the Duke-UNC rivalry for nearly four decades in a variety of fashions, playing for the Blue Devils from 1982-1986, serving as an assistant coach under Mike Krzyzewski from 1989-1992 and now broadcasting the games as a studio analyst for ESPN.

The Chronicle spoke with Bilas over the phone Saturday, discussing the best Duke-UNC games ever, how the rivalry has changed over the years and more. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

The Chronicle: To start off, obviously you broadcast a countless number of college basketball games each year. I'm just wondering, when you wake up to call a Duke-UNC game that day, is there a different feeling than all the other games that you cover?

Jay Bilas: Yes and no. I mean, no from the standpoint of your preparation is the same every game and how you go about your job is the same every game. But I think there's a different feeling simply because of the amount of attention the game draws. I mean, it's not only a rivalry game, which there are a lot of those, but it's somehow a rivalry that's not in any way outside of the sphere that are interested in. I mean, it's our highest rated game of the year, every year. And so it just carries a different feel than all the other games. I mean, it shouldn't be more important, theoretically, but it is.

TC: Going back to last February, a lot of people are comparing [Duke's comeback at North Carolina] to the Austin Rivers game.... In your opinion, are those two games in the conversation for best Duke-UNC games ever and which others belong in that conversation?

JB: Well, I don't think it's impacted the rivalry at all. I think it's the same, because every game is its own entity. Every game is really its own lifetime in a way.

TC: Related to that, you've been involved with the Duke-UNC rivalry since then. What's it been like each year since 2005? And which others belong to that conversation?

JB: We did not—I don't know that we were that aware of everything that was going on. We certainly didn't know it was gonna be a long-lasting thing, where it was starting some sort of tradition. That was sort of the innocent climb of the program, where there had been—probably '84, '85, '86, the program had been consistently nationally ranked, and then we rose up to be the No. 1 team in '86. And that was sort of the first of everything from Coach K, where it was his first ACC Championship, his first Final Four, his first No. 1 ranking and all that stuff. So, I'm not sure we knew sort of what it was gonna become, that you could fathom all this stuff. I certainly remember all the people waiting outside, but you never thought it would be an every year scenario.

TC: Obviously, everyone's seen the impact that no fans in the stands has had this season. But is it still gonna be weird seeing no fans involved [in Saturday's game]?

JB: I mean, the levels of weird of all this is... In your opinion, are those two games in the conversation for best Duke-UNC rivalry.

TC: Related to that, you've been involved with the rivalry since then. What's it been like each year since 2005? And which others belong to that conversation?

JB: It's been interesting. At first, I really didn't understand it, why people would want to wait outside all that time. I mean, I understood wanting to get the best seats, but doing it for weeks and weeks at a time when the truth is just about everybody gets in anyway—I didn't get it. But it's a social thing, too, and so it's become ritualistic and all that. Maybe it's just the way, kind of being there when we were, it's hard to wrap your head around waiting outside and sleeping in tents for weeks at a time. I don't get that when you've got a warm bed waiting for you somewhere else.
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By Jake C. Piazza

How the K-Ville experience has changed amid COVID-19

Normally around this time of year, the Cameron Crazies would be making last-second Amazon purchases for blue face paint and putting the finishing touches on their game day outfit. But this year, sophomore Emily Mittleman won’t get to show off her signature blue morph suit in Cameron Indoor Stadium.

And Krzyzewskiville won’t be filled with over 100 tents packed with sleep-deprived students competing for a coveted ticket to the Duke vs. North Carolina game.

And last, but certainly not least, when “Everytime We Touch” blares through the Cameron Indoor Stadium speakers right before tipoff of the Tobacco Road rivalry contest, Section Cameron Crazie, a now stadium-less fan longing for the roar of Cameron when everyone is cheering so loud and everything like that.

“Keep the K-Ville community going”

For many students, K-Ville is a pivotal part of the Duke experience, and junior Nitin Subramanian already knows he will make every moment count during the 2021-22 season.

“In past years, if I had to study or have a test or something, I’m like, I’m probably not gonna go to the game,” Subramanian said. “But next year it feels like the very last chance I’ll have to be in Cameron, really, so [I’m] gonna try to make every game. Obviously gonna black out and everything, too.”

The days Subramanian speaks of are still far away, and while fully recreating the buzz that surrounds a typical Tobacco Road rivalry game is impossible right now, Duke’s governing body of K-Ville, the line monitors, created an app to salvage the experience as best they can.

“We kind of came up with this way...to keep the K-Ville community going,” co-head line monitor Hope Morales said.

On a safe note, Duke students may know Morales as the line monitor who brings a plastic baby doll into every Duke game and hoists it up like Simba on the jumbotron. And for those wondering, the baby does still in fact go to every Duke home game thanks to Coach K’s daughter, Debbie Savarino, who sets the baby up with a great seat to watch all the action.

The way the line monitor’s app, Blazec, works is similar to the structure of K-Ville tenting in a normal year. Students can virtually group into tents of up to 10 people, and in the weeks leading up to the big game, there are online competitions where the tents can earn points. Since the normal incentives are temporarily on hold, the line monitors created a new reward system to liven up the remote K-Ville experience.

For anyone unfamiliar with the tradition, each year, in the event that the Blue Devils beat the Tar Heels in Cameron Indoor Stadium, there is a University-sanctioned bench-burning in the quads of West Campus. Students scurry out of the stadium, dorm rooms and off-campus apartments immediately after the final buzzer sounds to celebrate with their classmates around the makeshift bonfire.

For freshman Sue Zhang, missing out on the bench-burning afterward is the very last chance I’ll have to be in Cameron, really, said. “Nothing really compares to the energy in Cameron, like the energy of it,” Mittleman said. “I think such a big part of the game is coming in Cameron, the like of energy of it.” Mittleman said. “Nothing really compares to the energy in Cameron when everyone is cheering so loud and everything like that.”

This is the modern-day plight of the Cameron Crazie, a now stadium-less fan longing for the roar of Cameron when everyone is cheering so loud and everything like that.

For freshman Sue Zhang, missing out on the bench-burning afterward is the very last chance I’ll have to be in Cameron, really, said. “Nothing really compares to the energy in Cameron, like the energy of it,” Mittleman said. “I think such a big part of the game is coming in Cameron, the like of energy of it.” Mittleman said. “Nothing really compares to the energy in Cameron when everyone is cheering so loud and everything like that.”
LAST YEAR

A look back at when everything was normal

By Derek Saul
Sports Features Editor
Conner McLeod
Associate Sports Editor

On March 7, 2020, thousands of people packed into Cameron Indoor Stadium to watch Duke take on North Carolina in a highly anticipated matchup between the Tobacco Road rivals. As it turns out, that game will live on in history for more than what happened on the court: It was just days before the college basketball season was cancelled and the world flipped upside down.

Sitting on press row for that March 7 contest were us, Derek Saul and Conner McLeod, The Chronicle’s sports editor and sports managing editor at the time, respectively. As the Blue Devils prepare to host the Tar Heels Saturday in a fall-less Cameron, we reflect on the 2020 meeting, a night that feels like it took place in another era.

McLeod: Where were you on the last day before the world as we knew it abruptly came to an end? For Duke students, the final basketball game of the regular season against none other than the Tar Heels marked the last day of unmasked, pandemic-free fun on the hallowed campus of Duke University.

Saul: Gameday for most consisted of the usual Krzyzewskiville shenanigans, as tenters and non-tenters alike celebrated Duke basketball, the beating heart of the student body which almost never fails in bringing the campus together. For Derek and I, however, we were mentally preparing for what we knew to be the biggest benefit of serving as sports editor and managing editor of The Chronicle, the layup line show-stopping dunks via Cassius Stanley.

Despite the insane academic rigor at Duke, getting to my press row seat remains the hardest task I’ve had in my undergraduate career. Gameday against North Carolina proved to be the hardest attempt yet, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nobody knew it then, but it would be the last game Duke would play of the year before dropping out of the ACC and NCAA tournaments due to COVID-19. Although the 2020-21 season didn’t go to plan, Derek and I will at least have the vivid memory of the day.

Pre-game events left us excited and amped for the day ahead, but nothing compared to actually doing what Derek and I waited to do for about two and a half years: cover and report on Duke’s matchup against North Carolina.

Saul: That March 7 contest was Duke’s last action for almost nine months, so it’s only fitting that the game was memorable in its own right.

Even though North Carolina entered the contest with a 13-12 record, it was still an instalment of the Tobacco Road rivalry, so the atmosphere in Cameron Indoor Stadium was electric. The underdog Tar Heels kept it close all evening, until the unlikeliest of heroes emerged for the Blue Devils: rarely used fifth-year senior Justin Robinson, who helped Duke to an 89-76 victory.

Getting his first career start on Senior Night, Robinson turned in the performance of a lifetime. His 13 points, six rebounds, three assists and four blocks were all career-highs. As I wrote at the time: “Already having played the best game of his college career, Robinson fell to the ground while taking a contested triple with 4:27 remaining in the contest. The shot fell for Robinson’s fourth 3-pointer of the night, sending the crazed Cameron crowd into a blissful frenzy.

“This was everything he could have dreamt of and more.”

This was supposed to just be Duke’s regular-season finale, with the ACC and NCAA tournaments—the “real season,” as Robinson called it—still to come. But that turned out to be the last game the 2019-20 Blue Devils would ever play. Just five days later, the NCAA tournament was cancelled, and our country spiraled into the depths of the pandemic.

No matter what, this would have been a game I would remember for the rest of my life. Sitting centercourt in press row for the home game against North Carolina is seen as the biggest benefit of serving as sports editor or sports managing editor of The Chronicle, and the game itself was exciting. But, as is the case for so many people, I’ll remember this game for being many lasts. It’s the last time I’ll sit in Cameron as a Duke student, the last time I’ll enter Cameron’s press row and, most importantly, the last time I’ll feel like “normal” as a Duke student.

This year, Conner and I will cover the North Carolina game remotely. There will be no Cameron Crazies in attendance, nobody on press row and none of the raucous atmosphere the game is famous for. But, hey, at least the last game many of us got to see in Cameron was one we’ll never forget.

Our Derek Saul and Conner McLeod had the honor of covering last year’s Duke vs. North Carolina game at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Before sitting at our assigned seats, Derek and I were allowed to stand on the sidelines near press row, somewhat sharing the court with the athletes who would later be putting on a show for the arena. The aura of the event actualized into court vibrations felt in my body as I stood just feet away from the nervous pregame dribbling of Tre Jones and the layup line show-stopping dunks via Cassius Stanley.

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