

A modern twist on the UNC-State rivalry

Julius Hodge has never been great at hiding his emotions. Nor has the former All-ACC forward ever been shy about expressing his allegiance to N.C. State.

So it should come as no surprise, that as a card carrying member of the Wolfpack, Hodge has followed the recent struggles of rival North Carolina with uncontrollable giddiness.

First came a winter in which the Tar Heel basketball team



Dan Wiederer

ran face first into a brick wall, losing 16 times and leaving coach Roy Williams downright downtrodden.

Now, the Carolina

football program has been put in a straitjacket by an NCAA investigation that alleges several forms of misconduct.

Hodge can't even begin to describe exactly how fulfilled he's felt as an observer to all this. But he'll readily confess to chronic stomach cramps — from laughing so darn hard.

"I love the debacle that is the North Carolina institution," Hodge told me Thursday. "It is Christmas for me right now. Everyone at Carolina thinks they have this elite little fraternity and they can't be touched. And now, with this predicament over not doing things the right way, it's funny. Seeing their athletic director squirm, seeing the football coach look like he's seen a ghost, it's really been a great time in Raleigh."

Not to worry, UNC fans. Bobby Frasor has always found it easy to be candid with his thoughts, too. The former Tar Heel point guard has never shied away from rolling his eyes at loudmouth, boastful N.C. State backers.

People like Julius Hodge, for example. So Frasor quickly delivers his two cents.

"Typical State guy," he said. "They're the stepchild to Carolina. They hate that they're always ignored. They know Carolina gets all the attention, and rightfully so. But now that we have some bad publicity, they're eating it up. They have nothing better to do."

Talk show

It's go time, baby!

A century-old Tobacco Road beef has just sent two new and spirited fighters to the ring. And

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it seems quite unlikely either will leave without throwing every punch he has.

Best of all, the two lovable basketball players have taken the bickering to the Tweetosphere, regularly fueling the shared animosity with quick-wit barbs — measuring 140 characters or less, of course.

Let's get something straight. The conversation between Wolfpack and Tar Heel fans needs more antagonism like Carrie Underwood needs more charm. But so long as we're at it, there could not be two better smack talk spokesmen than Hodge and Frasor, a couple of kids with their fingers directly on the pulse of the rivalry and never afraid to say exactly what's on their mind.

It's still a little unclear how this Twitter relationship between @Follow24Hodge and @BFrasor began. What's perfectly clear, however, is that there are no holds barred in this part-friendly, part-hostile debate.

Rather than retweet the online war that's been going on for the past few months, here's a snapshot synopsis.

Hodge has been gloating over the Tar Heel football scandal, renaming the school UNCheat and reminding everyone that Butch Davis has never beaten Tom O'Brien.

Frasor has been quick to point out that Hodge played basketball, not football, at State and that the Wolfpack has beaten UNC on the hardwood only once in the past seven seasons.

Hodge is quick to shoot back that he was 4-4 against UNC during his time in Raleigh.

Frasor then delivers this: "Pack fans, I'm trying to upload our NCAA championship. If you need help converting the VHS of your last one, let me know."

Cheap shots

Late last month, as Frasor playfully discussed

his performance in that 2009 national game, alerting his Twitter followers that he had made drastic improvement in the 16 months since, Hodge wondered aloud whether that meant Frasor was claiming to finally be deserving of his scholarship to Carolina.

To which Frasor shot back: "Which is more deserving, my scholarship offer or you being drafted #20 in the first round?? Debatable...."

Apparently, it's Andrew Golota officiating this low-blow affair.

"Occasionally, there's a little tension," Frasor said.

As the discussion has continued, Hodge has told Frasor he'll gladly play him 1-on-1, spot him nine points in a game up to 11 and still win.

Frasor said he'll happily take that bet and could bet Hodge scoring only with his left hand.

The entire conversation — if that's what we want to call it — has become utterly ridiculous.

"It is ridiculous," Frasor agreed. "That one-on-one thing would be a joke. He'd give me nine points? Are you kidding me? It's not like I'm an incompetent basketball player."

Hodge can only laugh.

"I'd get one stop on defense," he responded. "And then I'd just post him up the rest of the way. That's how we play one-on-one in New York. So there's absolutely no way I could lose to that guy."

Keeping the peace

Suddenly, it's clear what makes these two Tobacco Road alums so enjoyable. No matter how heated the conversation gets, neither player will ever take himself too seriously.

Hodge isn't afraid to say it. He thinks Frasor is hilarious.

"I love his humor," he said with a laugh. "He takes his shots but you can always tell it's in good fun."

Frasor can only shrug. He thinks Hodge is the perfect representative for N.C. State, too, and readily admits how silly this argument can sometimes be.

"I think I read something online from Gary Busey," Frasor said. "There's a new saying that 'Beef over Twitter is like two blind men having a staring contest.'" Only, somehow, this is a staring contest worth watching.

Besides, if the popularity of this back-and-forth continues rising, we might have a fascinating new comedy tandem.

"I know Bobby's a great guy," Hodge said. "Before too long, I don't think it's out of the question that we'll have our own 'Julius and Bobby' radio show or TV show. We'll blow the ratings through the roof."

It can't be. Does Hodge really mean it? Does he really believe a diehard member of the Wolfpack could co-exist harmoniously with a true blue Tar Heel?

"Of course," Hodge said. "It'd be non-stop entertainment."

And then, just as the world seems ready to spin off its axis, Hodge delivers the twist.

"Besides," he said, "by that time, ya know, both the football and the basketball programs at UNC will be under NCAA sanctions. And it will be a great time to be a member of the Wolfpack."

Frasor has yet to respond. But no doubt, the retort is coming soon. On a Twitter feed near you.

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