

Fuel to the fire



Staff file photo

Duke's Gerald Henderson gives an elbow to Tyler Hansbrough in the closing seconds of a March 4, 2007, game in Chapel Hill. Henderson was ejected for the flagrant foul.

Last year's incident between Henderson, Hansbrough stokes already bitter rivalry

By Dan Wiederer

Staff writer

Confusion. Anger. Indignation.

All of it had swirled together inside the Dean E. Smith Center last spring as Gerald Henderson made an unforgettable march from the Duke bench to the visitor's tunnel, his eyes straight ahead, storming through a tornado of bitterness and profanity.

"It was probably the most hostile environment I've ever been in," Henderson remembers. "It felt like the whole stadium was right on top of me."

The Duke sophomore will make the same walk Wednesday night when his second-ranked Blue Devils stomp back into Chapel Hill for a showdown with No. 3 North Carolina.

Here, 339 days after his flying forearm across Tyler Hansbrough's face left the North Carolina All-American with a broken nose and further fueled college basketball's most hyped rivalry, Henderson will traverse the same path in reverse.

Out of the locker room, down a hall, through the tunnel and back onto the Smith Center floor where, again, the whole stadium will be right on top of him.

"It will be ugly," said UNC play-by-play announcer Woody Durham, whose 50 years around the Carolina-Duke rivalry give him enough experience to know. "There will be people rearranging their days to arrive here early just to be there when Henderson makes his first appearance."

'It's not a dead issue'

By now, the replay has been viewed approximately 1,748,000 times on ESPN and twice as much on YouTube. With 14.5 seconds left in an 86-72 Carolina win last March, Hansbrough chased down the rebound of his own missed free throw, rose for a putback and was clobbered in mid-air by Henderson, whose swinging forearm broke his nose.

Yet it's not just that foul that has those within the Carolina program still agitated to this day. It's the way things were handled in the hours and days that followed, Duke's apology neither prompt nor heartfelt enough for the Tar Heels' liking.

With Hansbrough a bloody mess in the postgame aftermath, Henderson did not come to the Carolina locker room to apologize. No one from Duke did.

See **RIVALRY**, Page 3C

Vitale to return as analyst for showdown

You might want to turn the volume down now. The sound of college basketball is about to get a lot louder.

After nearly two months of suffering in silence while his surgically repaired vocal chords healed, Dick Vitale is again ready to take up his usual spot at courtside behind an ESPN microphone.

It's only appropriate that his return is scheduled to take place Wednesday at the Smith Center.

As if the first of two North Carolina-Duke showdowns needed any extra hype.

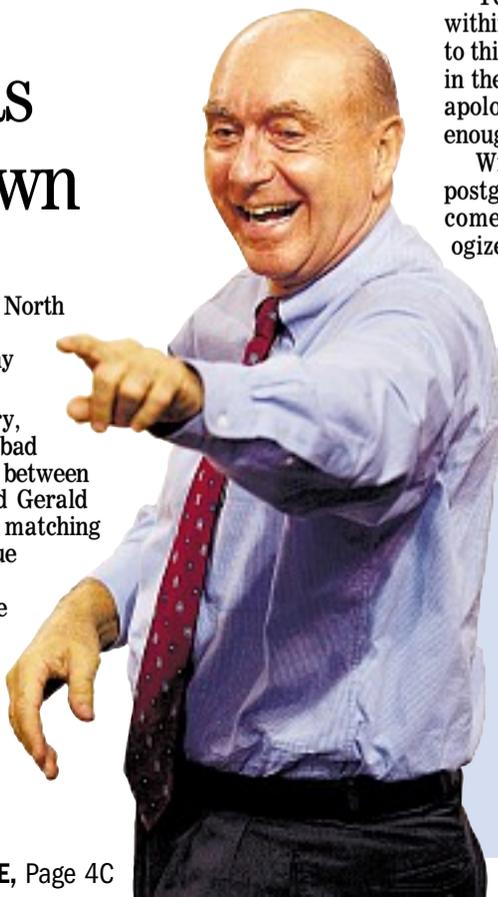
Between the rivalry, the rankings and the bad blood that still exists between Tyler Hansbrough and Gerald Henderson, the game matching the second-ranked Blue Devils and No. 3 Tar Heels was already the most anticipated of the season to date.

Now, with Vitale's return also thrown into the mix, it's going to be nothing less than *awesome, baby*.

See **VITALE**, Page 4C



BRETT FRIEDLANDER



NO. 2 DUKE AT NO. 3 UNC

- **When:** Wednesday, 9 p.m.
- **Where:** Smith Center in Chapel Hill
- **TV:** WRAL-5, WECT-6

INSIDE

- Lawson questionable for UNC
- A look at other heated moments in the UNC-Duke rivalry, **Page 3C**

Conflicts of Interest

Here's a look at three other infamous moments of bitterness in the history of the Duke-UNC rivalry.

FEB. 4, 1961

1 With both teams ranked in the top five and both a perfect 7-0 in ACC play, the stakes and the emotion of the rivalry had reached a new peak.

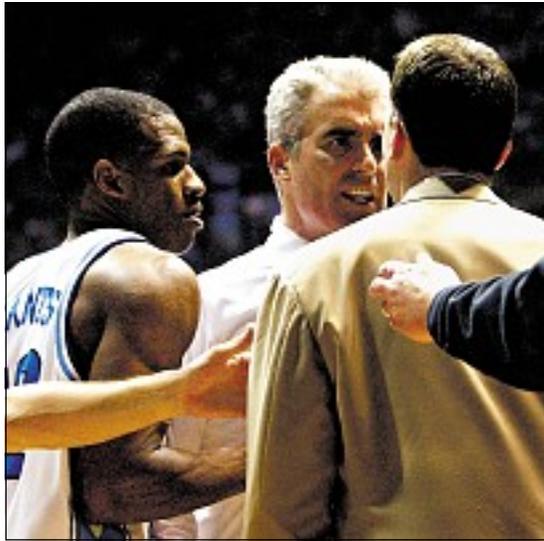
The intensity boiled over in the closing seconds of Duke's 81-77 win in Durham when Blue Devils star Art Heyman committed a hard foul on Larry Brown under the basket and near the Carolina bench. Brown took offense and bounced up, both players began swinging and in a blink of an eye both Tar Heel players and Duke fans had rushed onto the floor for an unruly brawl.

MARCH 9, 2003

2 In the second half of an 82-79 Carolina win in Chapel Hill, Tar Heels freshman Raymond Felton took an elbow from Dahntay Jones, and as UNC

coach Matt Doherty, middle right, went to help his point guard up near the Duke bench, he exchanged heated words with Blue Devils assistant Chris Collins.

With the two coaches yelling at one another, Duke reserve Andre Buckner popped into the fray and pushed Doherty with two hands to the chest, setting off a mini-melee of pushing and shoving before officials could restore order.



AP file photo

MARCH 11, 1979

3 With both teams in Raleigh for the NCAA tournament, Duke fans had a good laugh at the misfortune of their rivals when the top-seeded Tar Heels dropped a 72-71 stunner to Penn at Reynolds Coliseum.

The taunting Blue Devils fans were then given a taste of their own medicine hours later when their team also lost its tournament opener, falling 80-78 to St. John's.

— Compiled by Dan Wiederer

Rivalry

From Page 1C

Then, of all the things Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski could have said the morning after to ease the tension between the teams, he said this:

"It's unfortunate," Krzyzewski told reporters on the ACC coaches conference call. "And the person it's most unfortunate for is G."

Krzyzewski felt very strongly that Henderson had not intentionally injured Hansbrough, that had Duke walk on Steve Johnson not pulled Hansbrough backward that Henderson's block attempt would have had a more legitimate and less controversial result.

Krzyzewski wanted it known that Henderson is a classy player and he hated to see one of his Blue Devils' reputations tarnished by one excessive foul for which he would be sternly punished. (Henderson was suspended by the ACC for Duke's conference tournament opener.)

But the Carolina camp took that damage control as a slight towards Hansbrough, coach Roy Williams feeling insulted that the Blue Devils seemed more concerned with protecting Henderson's reputation than they were with Hansbrough's broken nose.

Some of Henderson's postgame comments in which he referred to Hansbrough as "the kid" also annoyed Tar Heel players.

So as the two rivals face off Wednesday in a showdown with major ACC championship implications, the fallout from last season's episode has not yet fully disintegrated.

"It's not a dead issue," said injured UNC guard Bobby Frasier, who doubles as Hansbrough's roommate. "Because it was such a big deal and every time we play them it's going to be brought up. From our vantage point, it was weird the way things were handled. ... If it was any other school, Tyler would have had some initial resentment then probably forgiven them. But because it was Duke,



Staff file photo

Tyler Hansbrough is held back after having his nose broken during last year's Duke game.

it's intensified everything."

Coach K: Overreaction

Just last week, Krzyzewski stated his viewpoint on the matter with as much conviction as ever.

"Tyler's a great kid and a great player," he said. "And he got hurt. But the blood made it look like somebody got shot. And I think people overreacted."

By "people" Krzyzewski meant Tar Heels fans, whom he knows will be as hostile as ever come Wednesday night.

"We've had a lot of hard fouls in our league and people forget about them," Krzyzewski said. "But they won't forget about that because of that rivalry. People who are cheering for Carolina don't want to forget about it. That's their prerogative. ... For us, that's in the past and if anybody wants to bring it up, that's good. They can do that. But people who always bring up the past a lot of times don't pay attention to the present or the future."

Different view at UNC

Fifteen minutes away in Chapel Hill, on a campus paint-

ed in a lighter shade of blue, the attitude is quite different, the Tar Heels feeling like they've had good reason to be upset.

Sure, Hansbrough hated the protective masks he had to wear for the 13 days after the foul, nuisances that contributed to his subpar ACC tournament performance in which he shot 9-for-23 and totaled just 30 points over three games.

But he hated the aftermath even more, irked that Henderson needed four days to deliver his apology, finally connecting via cell phone on the first day of the ACC tournament.

Hansbrough may have publicly forgiven Henderson, but that doesn't mean he closed the

books on the matter.

"I mean, I still had a broken nose," he said.

Williams' stance has never changed, the UNC coach believing that regardless of Henderson's intent, Hansbrough should have been entitled to more sympathetic treatment.

"I like Gerald Henderson," Williams said. "I have no problem saying that. I tried to recruit him. I spoke to his dad afterwards. But it seemed like there seemed to be more emphasis on (defending his character) as opposed to focusing on the guy who had his nose broken and now had to wear a mask. Tyler was the victim. There was no question about it. And I want-

ed to make sure people remembered that."

Some like it hot

On Wednesday night, the roles will reverse somewhat with Henderson likely to be victimized by the barbs of bitter UNC fans. Under the spotlight of a rivalry that is both heated and theatrical, the sophomore's walk back onto the Smith Center floor will be an unforgettable experience.

Duke assistant Chris Collins, no stranger to being loathed inside the Smith Center, believes Henderson has no choice but to embrace the animosity that will be directed at him.

"You want to be liked but now you're a lightning rod," Collins said. "When G walks in that building, there's no doubt people will be yelling at him, calling him names, saying he's this, saying he's that. But that should focus you in on that competitive side of you within to say, 'Hey I'm going to get you guys tonight on the floor.'"

Henderson insists he's ready for what awaits and expressed surprise with the way his villainous reputation has taken on a life of its own in Chapel Hill.

"It's crazy," he said. "But Tyler is obviously an All-American. He's a hell of a player. And a lot of people like him. So it didn't shock me that a lot of people wanted to defend him. If anything, the rivalry really came out. I guess that's part of my life now."

And forever a part of a rivalry that will boil for generations to come.

Staff writer Dan Wiederer can be reached at wiederer@fayobserver.com or 486-3536.

Across town or around the world.

Read The Fayetteville Observer online, exactly as it appears in print.

