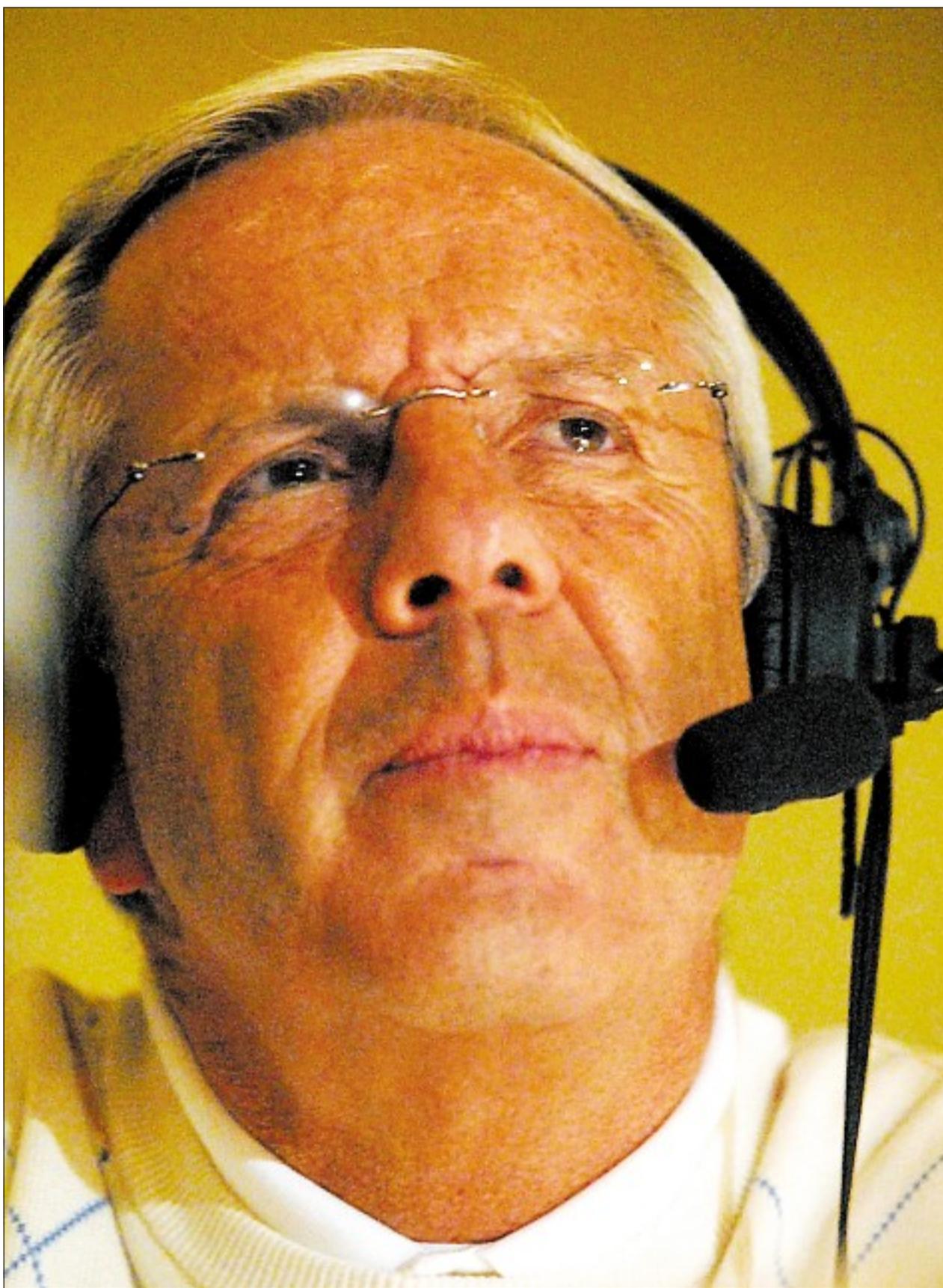


“ You’re opening up your profession to criticism from anyone with access to a phone line... You don’t know anything about them, let alone if they know a lick about basketball. ”

Roy Williams, UNC basketball coach on his weekly radio show



Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera

North Carolina basketball coach Roy Williams listens to a caller during his radio show at Spice Street Restaurant in Chapel Hill.

# Radio static

By Dan Wiederer

Staff writer

**CHAPEL HILL** — As he slips into his spring jacket and climbs down from the stage, Roy Williams has that Academy Award-winning grin pasted across his mug.

With obvious grace and as much sincerity as he can muster, the North Carolina coach politely shakes a few hands, signs autographs and poses for a series of refrigerator door pictures.

His smile seemingly indelible, you’d swear Williams was actually enjoying himself.

In reality, his getaway cannot come soon enough.

The Tar Heels coach has just survived the hour-long weekly torture chamber that is “Roy Williams Live” — or as the coach might prefer to call it: The hour I wish I had back.

Catching the eye of a familiar face nearby, Williams bugs his eyes out and exhales through puffed cheeks, emitting the look of a man who just emerged from a

## ‘HEY COACH, HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT...’

Without fail, many of the call-in questions North Carolina coach Roy Williams fields on his weekly radio show start the exact same way.

Hey Coach, have you thought about...

Williams typically cuts it right there.

“Yes,” he’ll say. “I have.”

Williams’ rationale?

“My explanation to them,” Williams says, “is that while they may be a pharmacist or a real estate guy or a homebuilder, it’s not something they think about 24 hours a day every day the way I do with basketball. And not only myself but I have four other assistants who 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with the exception of Christmas day, all we think about is basketball. How to do this, how to do that. Should we do this? Should we do that? So there’s nothing, absolutely nothing you could ever ask that we haven’t thought about.”



## CLOSER LOOK

- **Who:** Duke at North Carolina
- **Where:** Smith Center, Chapel Hill
- **Records:** UNC 24-6, 10-5 ACC, Duke 22-8, 8-7
- **When:** Sunday, 4 p.m.
- **TV:** CBS

# Roy radio: In reality, Williams' getaway can't come soon enough

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colonoscopy.

"Thrilling stuff, ain't it?" he says. "I get to do this every week."

On this Monday at Spice Street, an upscale restaurant tucked into University Mall not far from campus, there are several numbers Williams doesn't like. There is the 46-33 rebounding deficit from the Tar Heels' loss at Maryland the day before; UNC's .471 free throw percentage in that game; and the four ACC losses that have intensified the heat on the race for the conference championship.

But inevitably, it's that one number that surfaces every Monday, that causes Williams' stomach to turn like a water wheel.

**1-866-TAR-HEEL**

That's the number, toll free, that connects Lee from Kernersville with the boss of the UNC basketball program. That's the number that allows Jan in Greensboro to candidly address the man with 518 career wins and an .801 winning percentage and question his strategy on defending the 3-point shot.

"It's a crazy deal," Williams

says. "You're opening up your profession to criticism from anyone with access to a phone line. You don't know if they're in church, in prison, if they're dead. You don't know anything about them, let alone if they know a lick about basketball."

## Much ado about nothing

Every Monday, the questions range from the personal to the strategic to the cockamamie. Williams, as he always does, answers openly, revealing that his favorite places to golf include Grandfather Mountain in Linville and Mount Mitchell in Burnsville; that he isn't overly concerned with his team's success in the ACC tournament next week; and that yes, he is aware that freshman Brandon Wright, who missed two crucial free throws in the final seconds of the Maryland loss, is not the best foul shooter on the team.

"It always amazes me about fans and what they think they know and what they think the coaches don't know," says Woody Durham, the host of the show and longtime voice of the Tar Heels. "They haven't seen a practice. They haven't even seen all the games. And yet they've all got what they think



UNC coach Roy Williams, left, has his picture taken with John Perterson, 8, by his mother, Myra Peterson, after his radio show transmitted live from Spice Street Restaurant in Chapel Hill.

Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera

are the answers for why Carolina lost and what Carolina's got to do to get tougher."

So what does Williams think of the interaction?

"What fascinates me, what intrigues me, what entertains me about it all?" he says. "That would be nothing, nothing and nothing."

For Williams, it's simply a necessary evil, part of his contractual obligation with the Tar Heel Sports Network, a deal that pays him close to \$350,000 annually and also requires him to do a weekly TV show with Durham. That task is simple with the 56-year-old coach doing little more than narrating highlights from past games.

The radio show? Not so much fun.

"If you think about it, how many people would want to have an open line for people they can't see, don't know and have no idea whether they're North Carolina fans, Duke fans, State fans, whatever and have them question what they're doing for a living?" Williams says. "It's a uniqueness that you just don't have in any other profession."

## Strategy, seafood, secrets

On this night, Williams' most frequent caller, Sandy

from Raleigh, checks in midway through the show, mostly to commend the coach on his team managing assists on 64 percent of its field goals in the Feb. 17 win at Boston College. Sandy computed this.

The show's other longtime caller, a young boy named Nicholas from Liberty, is notably absent this week. He must be tied up or still trying to come up with a question to top his best one.

Says Durham: "Not long ago Nicholas called in all excited (and asked), 'Roy is it true that you ate at Captain Tom's Seafood outside of Ramseur?' Roy just laughed and said, 'Yeah it is Nicholas. I was on the way back from a golf trip and the group I was with got hungry. We saw the billboard for Captain Tom's and turned in.'"

Yep, this is "Roy Williams Live," not exactly a Socrates lecture on the meaning of life. And so when one caller prefaces his question about Wayne Ellington's shot selection with the revelation that "I ain't no coach or nuthin'" Williams can't contain an amused chuckle.

Moments later, Stephen in Jackson County is on the line with "a few coaching secrets for Roy" though he's not sure

this is the best forum to reveal them.

"In case there might be some Duke fans listening," Stephen says.

Marginally intrigued, Williams tries to remain attentive. And then the Xs and Os discussion veers wildly off course crashing into some Twilight Zone where a Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame finalist is being held hostage for a dissertation on when and why the shot clock should reset.

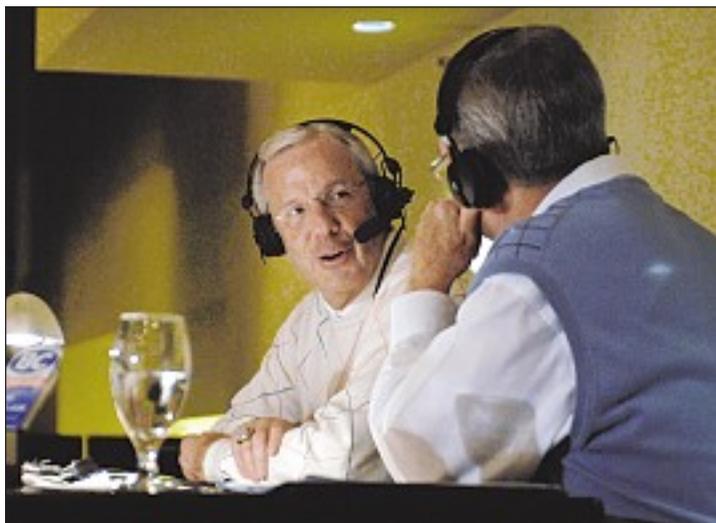
"I would never tell a doctor or a lawyer or an insurance man what he should be doing," Williams says. "But it's just a part of the business where people regardless of what they do, they're also an expert on coaching."

It's easy to see now why the minute the show ends, Williams is slipping into that jacket and racing for the Spice Street exit.

"It really is something I'd rather not be doing," he says. "If there was anything that I do weekly that I would like to get rid of, there's no question it would probably be that. Because I could use that time to relax. I could go to dinner with my wife. I could sleep. I could watch tape. I could practice an hour longer. I can think of a lot of other things I'd rather do."

In a blink he's gone, free from the knucklehead questions. Until next week.

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Staff photo by Raul R. Rubiera

Roy Williams, left, speaks during his radio show with Woody Durham held live at the Spice Street Restaurant in Chapel Hill.

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