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Duke, UNC students attempt new chapter in rivalry: a world record

AARON BEARD
Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. - It's nowhere near the kind of intensity Mike Krzyzewski or Roy Williams would like in a Duke-North Carolina matchup.

There are no aggressive defensive traps beyond the 3-point arc. The offense isn't flowing at never-stop-running speed. And while there are some fast breaks, ball handlers often walk upcourt while defenders allow plenty of room to breathe.

But the players are keeping a closer eye on the clock than on point totals.

The teams - made up of 12 students from the Atlantic Coast Conference rivals and in-state neighbors - are trying to set a world record for the longest basketball game by playing for nearly 2 1/2 days straight to raise money for charity. And they're doing whatever they can to keep the clock and their legs moving until Monday evening.

"I think even as a player, you think, 'OK, 58 hours, that's a long time,'" said Drew Braucht, a 20-year-old Duke sophomore who had just started his break after an extended playing shift. "But the more you think about it, the more absurd it becomes.

"Right now, I'm trying not to be like, 'Monday I'll still be here.' It's just 'Forget that for now.'"

The game began at 8 a.m. Saturday in Fetzer Gymnasium on the Chapel Hill campus with former U.S. senator and Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards - who earned his law degree at UNC - throwing the ceremonial opening tip. It is scheduled to run through 6 p.m. Monday, which would blow away the mark of 30 hours, 12 minutes set in Nebraska in 2004 and listed on the Guinness World Records' Web site.

Game organizers were informed later by Guinness of a more recent record of 33 hours, 35 minutes, set in Germany last April. The marathon surpassed both those marks Sunday.

The student players and coaches must remain in the gymnasium with the exception of getting five-minute breaks per hour to use the bathroom. In addition, certified medical personnel and referees are required to attend throughout. Points are kept on flip cards flanking a large digital clock counting each second at the scorer's table, and fouls are reset every two hours unless a player fouls out.

The coaches spent more time devising rotation schedules than strategy. Those who finished their playing shift Saturday afternoon often headed for the table of peanut butter, apples, nutrition bars, Gatorade and other snacks.

Others went right to the air mattresses behind the baseline - segregated by school, of course - to steal some shut-eye, read or listen to headphones and try to recharge in time for their next appearance.

For UNC freshman Brian Waer, that meant eating a peanut butter sandwich while stretching and talking with friends after a three-hour run.

"I felt good," he told them, "but that last hour seemed to take forever."

"It takes a lot out of you," he admitted to a reporter later.

That much was clear after only a few minutes Saturday afternoon. Players were walking up the court and taking quick jumpshots on one possession, only to see the pace gradually increase for stretches that had organizers a little worried at the beginning.

About eight hours in, Duke led 523-465, a pace of about 124 points per hour.

"We had to ask the coaches to slow down," said UNC junior Greg Richmond, who organized the event. "And of course, the Duke coaches said Carolina was pushing the pace, and Carolina said it was Duke."

Richmond, an intern at the university's Newman Catholic Student Center, came up with the idea after hearing a radio report last summer about a record-long softball game. He wanted to try something similar as part of the Duke-North Carolina rivalry, and contacted Duke's Newman center to see if it would be interested.

The idea took off, with the schools combining to have more than 80 students involved in organizing the event and about 200 volunteers attending. The schools also have competed to see who could raise the most money to benefit the Hoop Dreams Basketball Academy, a nonprofit that uses basketball to help improve the lives of children with life-threatening illnesses.

The schools hoped to raise \$80,000 for Hoop Dreams, from asking friends and family members for donations to having pledge slips for game spectators. The students also had local businesses and restaurants pledge money or donate food, while sporting goods maker Spalding sponsored the game and donated about 100 basketballs designed to hold air longer than traditional balls.

"Basketball's almost a religion here," said Duke junior David Walker, who led Duke's half of the project. "Obviously, the players

on each team are going to be looking at the other guys and coming out to win for themselves and go along with the history the schools share.

"It's almost inspirational to see students at each school really pull together with nothing more than a fantastic idea at the beginning."

Players probably won't feel so fantastic by Monday afternoon. And with the clock pushing toward 25 hours Sunday, the teams were still playing at about the same 124-point-per-hour pace. Duke led 1,628-1,465 with about 33 hours still to go.

The challenge at that point was to just keep dribbling.

"Obviously, it would be a disappointment (to fall short)," Walker said. "But it kind of stops there. I tell myself that the goal is to raise money for these kids, so in large part, this is the icing on the cake for me.

"To see the donations come in and how people have been willing to help has been incredible. Then to watch these guys try to break a world record is truly amazing. I hope they can pull it off."

ON THE NET

Duke-Carolina Student Basketball Marathon: <http://www.basketballmarathon.com>

Hoop Dreams: <http://www.hoop-dreams.net>

Guinness World Records: <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com>