

# The Thrill of Victory

## The greatest moments in North Carolina's sports history

North Carolina's soil, air and communities have bred plenty of outstanding athletes, some of whom went on to glory elsewhere while others remained here to thrill friends, neighbors and followers. We also have produced our share of sports and sports events. Before I learned otherwise, I thought both golf and basketball were invented in North Carolina. And I *know* stock car racing began here.

When Carolina Country asked you to name the most significant moment in North Carolina sports history, most submissions named college basketball events, especially UNC's 1957 national championship (the first for a team from the South), N.C. State's 1983 miracle championship, Duke's back-to-back titles in 1991 and 1992, then UNC's taking the title from Duke in 1993.

Others wrote about events in their own lives and close to the home field.

The selection here was made by judges who promised us they brought no favoritism to the task. The same is true for our selection of photography.

Thanks to everyone who reached us. The themes and rules for our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series are on page 18.

Go Heels.

— Michael E.C. Gery

**Pictured above:**

**N.C. State coach Jim Valvano and players after the 1983 national championship.**

**Pictured next page:**

**After he won the Winston in Charlotte in 2000, Dale Earnhardt Jr. (left) appeared on the victory stand with his dad.**



### The Wolfpack's win, April 1983

The greatest moment in North Carolina sports would have to be when Lorenzo Charles slammed the winning bucket for N.C. State in the 1983 NCAA tournament. That was the "Cardiac Pack" at their best. Last second before the final buzzer in overtime.

Charles didn't even realize what had happened. He was just playing ball the way he was taught. The look on his face when it dawned on him what had happened was a pure treasure. I yelled so hard and so long I got hoarse from it. I called my brother, who is a graduate of State, and all we did was holler at each other in pure glee! What a thrill that was!

And when Coach V came on the court, face aglow, arms held to the air, oh my, what a sight he was! Never have I seen a man more excited, happy, proud than he was at that moment. So glad that man had that wonderful thrill happen in his oh-too-short life.

Not only was that the finest moment in North Carolina sports because my team had won an amazing, exciting victory, but a good man who cared about people had achieved a goal with the young men he nurtured.

Jane W. Bozeman

Lexington

EnergyUnited

*Editor's Note:* The final game of the 1983 NCAA men's Division I championship on April 4 ended at the buzzer in regulation time, with N.C. State the unlikely winner 54-52, as Lorenzo Charles slam dunked a 35-foot airball tossed by teammate Dereck Whittenburg. The Wolfpack had trailed by four with 3:09 left, but Whittenburg hit back-to-back jumpers to tie the game with 1:59 left. Houston's Cougars included Akeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler and were ranked No. 1 in the nation. N.C. State finished the regular season 17-10, but won a berth in the tournament by winning the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament in Atlanta. In the ACC tournament, State beat Carolina 91-84 in overtime in the semifinal, then beat Virginia 81-78 in the final. Carolina was ranked No. 7 nationally and starred Michael Jordan and Sam Perkins, while Virginia was ranked No. 4 nationally and starred Ralph Sampson. State went on to beat Virginia again 63-62 in the West Regional finals. In the Final Four at Albuquerque, the Wolfpack beat Georgia before meeting Houston.

### **UNC on TV, March 1957**

It was 1957, on a Saturday in March. My parents had just brought my 17-year-old sister home from Duke University hospital. She had surgery for a terminal brain tumor and was to be bedridden. Since we did not have a TV, my uncles pooled their resources and bought my sister a TV that she could watch during her long hours in bed.

Our family settled down for our first night of TV in our own home. At about 9 p.m., the usual bedtime hour, my mother and younger brothers and sisters went to bed. However, my father and I remained up because there was to be a special basketball game on, UNC versus Kansas for the NCAA championship.

The game was a thriller, heart-stopping from beginning to end, and at the end it was tied. After the first overtime, my mother insisted that my father go to bed, and he did. I remained up, through two more OTs, and the game ended at 12:15 a.m. with UNC winning 54-53.

That day was one of firsts: our first TV, first televised game and the first NCAA championship for UNC. What a day!

*Tommy Denning  
Locust  
Union Power Cooperative*

### **Dale Jr. s Winston Cup 2000 win**

My favorite will always be the Winston Cup on May 20, 2000, at Lowes Motor Speedway in Charlotte. It was an awesome experience to be at the Winston and watch Dale Earnhardt Jr. come up through the pack in the final segment to win the race. It was also a lot of fun to watch his father come to Victory Lane to celebrate with him. That was an awesome moment for both North Carolina sports and for NASCAR.

*Gretta Paugh  
 Mooresville  
EnergyUnited*



### **The day of Dean Smith s letter, 1993**

Any Carolina basketball fan would know that April 5, 1993, was the day UNC won the national championship beating Michigan 77-71 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

My sister and I had gained tickets in the lottery about nine months before the tournament. At that time, she didn't know she had incurable cancer. By the time UNC began its tournament run, she knew and did her best to stay healthy just in case Carolina made it to the Final Four. She made it to New Orleans and climbed those humongous steps to see her alma mater win the national title. What a wonderful time that was for her. Thanks to Dean Smith and the squad, she had a final dream fulfilled.

But the best day came on June 30, 1993, when Dean Smith answered our personal letter. Some of it was form text for loyal fans, but he wrote 36 personal words and said he had told Lynch and Salvadori what fans we were of the team, and them in particular. What a gentleman Dean Smith is.

*Gail C. Johnson  
Arapahoe  
Tideland EMC*

### **When Jim Valvano hugged anyone in sight**

The phrase "We all go to NC State" must have been written with Jim Valvano in mind. On April 4, 1983, Coach V led the "Cardiac Pack" to the NCAA basketball championship.

After surviving thrilling games in the early rounds and advancing to the championship game, the NC State Wolfpack defeated "Phi Slamma Jamma" and the Houston Cougars to bring the national championship home to North Carolina.

Jim Valvano taught us the joy of being a fan. Our family had assigned seats for every game. I sat on the couch with Mom, while Dad was in his recliner. As Lorenzo Charles caught Dereck Whittenburg's pass and time expired, "V" ran around looking for someone to hug in

Albuquerque, while we hugged each other in Surry County.

The charismatic, animated and often imitated Valvano found a way to win with the less athletic, but more fundamentally sound team.

You do not have to be a Wolfpack fan to appreciate Jim Valvano. His legacy of togetherness and family tells us the strength of the "Wolf" is the "Pack." Jim Valvano used Wolfpack athletics as a vehicle for bonding the state of North Carolina to its finest sports moment.

*Lisa Brown  
Siloam  
Surry-Yadkin EMC*

*Continued on page 18.*

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Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

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"My Tips for Good Gardening"  
Tell us the technique that makes your garden grow.  
Deadline: Jan. 15

**April 2003**

"Best North Carolina Vacation – Off the Beaten Path"  
Where, why and send pictures.  
Deadline: Feb. 15

**May 2003**

"We Actually Saw a Wild. . ."  
Tell us about what you saw in the North Carolina wilderness.  
Deadline: March 15

**June 2003**

"The Finest Food in North Carolina"  
If you had to pick one North Carolina specialty, what would it be and why?  
Deadline: April 15

**July 2003**

"Why I Went Back to School"  
What was your most meaningful adult education experience?  
Deadline: May 15

**August 2003**

"The Funniest Story I Ever Heard"  
True, or not so true.  
Deadline: June 15

**September 2003**

"My Favorite Photo"  
Our annual photo gallery of North Carolina people and places.  
Deadline: July 15

**October 2003**

"Why I Like My Electric Cooperative"  
Is a cooperative different than other utilities?  
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**November 2003**

"The Finest Neighbor I Ever Knew"  
Tell us why and send a photo.  
Deadline: Sept. 15

**December 2003**

"How to Live a Long and Happy Life"  
Do you know an older person who sets a good example for staying healthy and happy? Send a photo, too.  
Deadline: Oct. 15

**The Rules**

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web site: www.carolinacountry.com

**When we coached tee-ball**

The finest moment in sports for me was when my husband and I coached young kids playing tee-ball. We had the best time. We loved it when a hitter would hit a ball and the whole team, even the outfield, would chase the ball. Or when one would hit the ball and run from home to second base instead of first. Their little hats were so big they covered up their whole face. The poor tee took one heck of a beating. They would hit it more than they would the ball. Or when they would hit the ball, they would just stand there instead of run. One time my husband had to carry a child to base because he was so shocked that he hit the ball.

I could not wait to go to the games, because no matter how bad my day had been, I knew that being at those games would cheer me up. I never have laughed so hard. If you ever are having a bad day, stop and go to a tee-ball game. By the time you leave, you will feel much better.



*Justin Lloyd concentrates on the ball.*

*Shelley Goff  
Fayetteville  
South River EMC*

**When North Carolina basketball grew up**



*Courtesy of ViCom Sports*

**UNC's Lenny Rosenbluth scores over Wilt Chamberlain in 1957.**

I was a teenager growing up in an eastern North Carolina town. During those years, I would listen to major league baseball on the radio. This was the only sport of interest to me. Then in 1957, the University of North Carolina had a basketball coach from New York named Frank McGuire. He recruited a New York player named Lenny Rosenbluth, plus four other outstanding recruits from New York.

By winning the last two championship games in triple overtime periods, this team won the NCAA basketball championship.

In the championship final, they defeated a Kansas team that had one of the greatest basketball players of all time, Wilt Chamberlain.

I watched these two games on a black-and-white television screen. These games transformed me into a die-hard college basketball fan.

It is my belief that these games helped to create an environment that brought better coaches to North Carolina and inspired kids all over the state to play basketball at an early age. This moment in sports also produced, eventually, two of the best North Carolina basketball players in college history: David Thompson of N.C. State and Michael Jordan of UNC.

These 1957 games played an integral role in making college basketball the sport that it is in North Carolina today.

*Jim Heaton  
Blowing Rock  
Blue Ridge Electric*

## My first and only Panthers game

To be completely honest, I have never really been a devoted sports fan. Furthermore, I don't really have a distinct memory of any sports team winning a World Series or Super Bowl. But I do have a cherished memory of my very first professional football game.

My daddy had two extra tickets to watch the Panthers play, in the very first year they were in town. Choosing me to accompany him made this day even more special. The Panthers didn't win, but I had the time of my life. As much popcorn as I could gobble up, as much soda as I could guzzle down — this was a dream, considering how much I love to eat.

Just my daddy and me watching big men run after each other and exchange glares of competitive fearlessness. It may have been a common event to the rest of the world, but it is forever a memory to me.

Allyson Willis  
Charlotte  
Union Power Cooperative

## When the Hurricanes came here

The finest moment in Carolina sports was when the Carolina Hurricanes came to North Carolina. They are a great addition to the other sports teams that North Carolina can call our own. There's nothing better than sitting down in a cold hockey rink with a nice hot cup of hot chocolate and watching hockey players dressed in five layers of clothes race after a little black puck. It just gives you a rush of happiness to see that little tiny black puck slide into the goal just as the goalie falls over while trying to stop it.

Until North Carolina got the Hurricanes, all we could watch on the professional level were football players in tight pants race after a little pigskin ball and sweaty basketball players run after a brown circular ball. Hockey makes sports fun to watch.

Nikki Elbate  
Charlotte

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