

CHC- Vanderbilt Upsets No. 1 Tar Heels

by Bill Traugher

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When Vanderbilt upset No. 1 Florida 83-70 Saturday afternoon, it became the sixth time a Vanderbilt team had upset the top ranked team in the nation. One of those six teams was against a legendary coach and one of college basketball's winningest teams.

Dean Smith brought his No.1 ranked North Carolina Tar Heels into Memorial Gymnasium on December 5, 1987. The Tar Heels visit to Nashville included a 4-0 record and a victory over previously No. 1 ranked Syracuse.

The Commodores were coached by C. M. Newton and entered the game with a 2-0 record. Vanderbilt was led by senior center Will Perdue, Frank Kornet, Charles Mayes, Barry Goheen and Barry Booker. Leaders were North Carolina were J. R. Reid, Jeff Lebo, Ranzino Smith, Kevin Madden and Scott Williams.

The 7-foot Perdue and sophomore Reid would draw most of the pregame hype.

"From what I've seen of him, he's an excellent player," said Kornet about Reid before the game. "I'll be facing some awfully good forwards in the SEC this season, but I don't expect any of them to be better than Reid. He's probably as good as I'll play."

Said Smith, "He's an All-American in my opinion," Smith said of Perdue. "Stopping Perdue is a concern. But they've also got two outstanding guards in Goheen and Booker. Vandy has its three key players back from the team that beat Indiana last year and that means they are a very capable team. That's why we're playing them. I expect this to be a good road test for us."

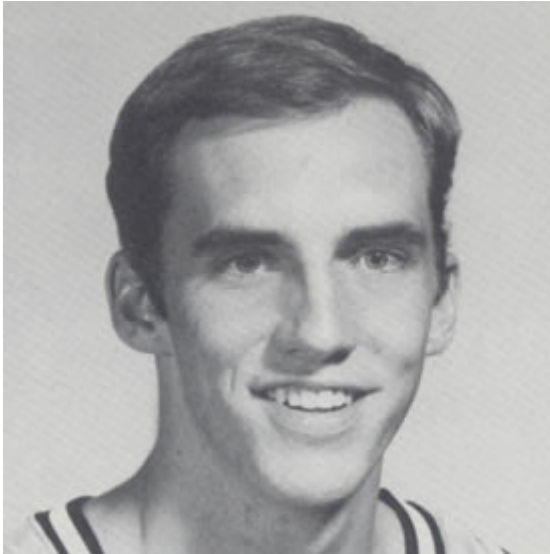
In the previous season the Commodores defeated Bobby Knight's Hoosiers 79-75 in Memorial Gymnasium. Indiana was ranked No.2 at the time and would continue that season to become NCAA National Champions.

Vanderbilt jumped out to a 13-4 lead early in the first period and held on to a 35-34-halftime lead. The Tar Heels jumped out to a six-point advantage at the 7:31 mark. Mayes, a freshman from Montgomery Bell Academy, hit one of his three key three-pointers in the final minutes followed by a Perdue hook and free throw. The Commodores now trailed 64-62 with 5:56 left.



Will Perdue

At the 3:26 mark, Mayes hit another three-pointer to give Vandy a 65-64 lead. Vanderbilt would find themselves leading by seven points, 76-69 with just 18 seconds left until the final buzzer. Then Smith's expertise in X's and O's came into effect while masterminding his timeouts.



Charles Mayes

In the next 15 seconds, Madden hit a three-pointer, Booker connected on a pair of free throws and Lebo hit a trey. The Commodores lead was down to 78-75 with three seconds on the clock. Lobo stole the inbound pass and was fouled while attempting to make the tying three-pointer.

In this era of basketball, the rules stated that while in the process of shooting a three-point shot, the shooter is allowed only two free throws. The previous year Vanderbilt lost a game to Houston while allowing the Cougars to attempt a three-point shot instead of the foul. The shot was good and Vandy lost, 73-72. Newton learned that he should have fouled the shooter at the time.

Lebo missed the shot, but made one free throw to give the Commodores a 78-76 victory. The 15,626 fans were on their feet in excitement.

"I don't agree with the rule," Newton said after the game. "I think a foul on a three-point attempt there should be a three-shot foul. But the rule's the rule and that's the way we are going to play it. You have to give Dean a lot of credit, he milked the clock in a way that borders on genius.

"I'm proud of our team for winning, but I'm even more proud of them for preparing to win. Coach (John) Bostic did an excellent job of scouting North Carolina and helping prepare our team for them."

Lebo, the current Auburn head coach and one-time Vanderbilt assistant, led the Tar Heels with 21 points Reid totaled 16 while Williams added 15. Vanderbilt hit for 47.5% and 8-of-20 three-pointers. North Carolina shot 47.9% and was 10-of-19 from three-point range.

Perdue led all scorers with 23 points (10 rebounds), Mayes finished with 16 (five-of-seven from three point range), Booker had 13 and Goheen tallied seven points. Vanderbilt held a 39-35 rebounding edge.

"I'm happy with our performance," Smith said. "We played even better than I thought we would. He (Perdue) was just too much for us inside. They just threw the ball up there, thinking he'd get it--and he did get it. I thought we did a better job on him in the first half than in the second.

"They got good shots for the most part. I want to congratulate C.M. and his staff. They had their team well prepared. It was a fun comeback. Coming down the stretch like that will help us in the future."

North Carolina finished their season 27-7 while becoming Atlantic Coast Conference Champions. They were ranked 7th in the nation after making the Final Eight in the NCAA Tournament. Dean would retire after 36 seasons (1960-97) and an all-time best Division I coaching record of 879-254. Texas Tech coach Bobby Knight recently broke that record.

Vanderbilt finished the season 20-11 (SEC, 10-8) with an appearance in the NCAA Sweet Sixteen. The Commodores beat Utah State and Pittsburgh (overtime) before falling to eventual national champs Kansas.



C. M. Newton

"The magic of this game is the crowd," Newton said. "This is what it's all about. When the students get cracking like that, they can lift your players and have an effect on the other team. It can be a very tough place for a visiting team to play."

Next week read an interview with the legendary Roy Skinner, Vanderbilt's all-time winningest basketball coach.

Traughber's Tidbit: The six Commodores' wins over No. 1 teams, ties Kentucky for most victories over a top ranked team by an SEC team. ESPN reported that Vanderbilt's six wins over No.1 teams are the most by a team that has never made a Final Four appearance. The cable television network also reported that the previous five wins ranked Vanderbilt tied for 11th nationally.

If you have any comments or suggestions you can contact Bill Traughber via e-mail WLTraughber@aol.com.