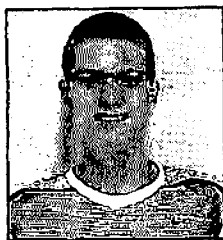


# Freshmen lead Duke to fifth national title



TRENTON DAESCHNER  
SPORTS EDITOR

Well, a team in blue has been crowned national champions of college basketball—only this team's mascot is not a Wildcat, and the roster doesn't quite boast a frontline that is comparable to redwood trees.

The Duke Blue Devils were certainly a talented team. After all, they boasted eight McDonald's All-Americans.

But who would've thought that Duke's freshmen, who scored 60 of the team's 68 points, would outplay the more experienced Wisconsin Badgers down the stretch of last Monday night's national championship game? After all, Wisconsin was up nine and in control with 13 minutes remaining. Frank Kaminsky, Wisconsin's senior leader and the Naismith Player of the Year, had his way with Jahlil Okafor, Duke's prized freshman and the likely No. 1 pick in the NBA Draft, for most of the night. But Kaminsky surprisingly and regretfully didn't get very many touches down the stretch, and his wingman, Sam Dekker, was cold shooting the ball for the entire night. Instead, it was the play of Duke guards Tyus Jones and Grayson Allen that propelled the Blue Devils to their fifth national title.

In similar fashion to the performance of ex-UConn guard Shabazz Napier in last year's national title game, it was the clutch play of Jones that helped seal the game for Duke, who outscored Wisconsin by 14 points over the final 13 minutes. Along with Allen, who chipped in 16 hard-earned, slashing points off the bench, Jones put on a late shooting performance that will be talked about in Durham, North Carolina for quite some time. He finished with 23 points for the game, including 19 in the second half. Not bad for a kid who all but guaranteed Duke would make a run in the tournament before he even stepped onto campus.

After 14-seed Mercer upset three-seed Duke in the first round of last year's NCAA tournament, Jones—a highly-routed recruit from Apple Valley, Minnesota who had committed to Duke—sent a brief, yet assuring text message to his future coach, Mike Krzyzewski: "This won't happen next year." You think Coach K screen-shorted that text message?

And speaking of Coach K, besides John Wooden, there has not been a better coach in the history of college basketball. He's won five national championships in many different eras, been to 12 Final Fours and has more victories than any coach in Division 1 history. He's done it with seniors, freshmen, Christian Laettner and seemingly the entire Plumlee family. He's even done it with "rent-a-players," to quote Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan. You mad, Bo?

Indeed, this season belonged to Kentucky. And for the first 27 minutes of last Monday night's game, Wisconsin thought it belonged to them, too. But in the end, it's Duke's boys in blue who will be remembered.

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