

# Duke gives encore performance as NCAA champs

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — History didn't come easy for the Duke Blue Devils. Nevertheless, history they made, energized at last by their star, Christian Laettner.

They became the first team in 19 years to repeat as NCAA champions Monday night with a 71-51 victory over Michigan's Fab Five freshmen, the youngest team to vie for the title.

"We won last year, but it's the best feeling to go out in my last game at Duke on a winning note," Laettner said.

After missing six of eight shots and making a season-high seven turnovers in the first half, Laettner finished with 19 points and seven rebounds.

"He was throwing up bricks and we were still down just one point," Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "I knew if we could turn up the emotion and get him back in the game we'd have a shot."

"I don't think we were emotionally drained," Laettner said. "I missed some shots and Michigan played well. I was playing really weak and we weren't rebounding. In the second half, we did a better job. I wasn't physically or emotionally drained."

Not since UCLA ended a seven-year reign as national champions in 1973 had a team managed to win two in a row.

Duke did it the hard way, with national player of the year Laettner struggling for the second straight game and another starter hobbled by injury.

Laettner, who personally lifted the Blue Devils to two of their five straight Final Four appearances with buzzer-beaters, rebounded from his worst half of the year to lead a closing 23-6 Duke charge.

Bobby Hurley, the floor leader who matched his career high of 26 points against Indiana in the semifinals,

hit only three of 12 shots in the championship game but had seven assists with his nine points and was named Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four.

"It wasn't a pretty game," Hurley said, "but we got the job done."

Grant Hill had a terrific all-around game for Duke with 18 points, 10 rebounds, five assists, three steals and two blocks. Thomas Hill added 19 points and seven rebounds for the Blue Devils.

However, it was Laettner's long-distance shooting that sparked Duke, which trailed 31-30 at halftime.

Laettner's 3-pointer 44 seconds into the second half gave Duke the lead for good, 35-33. Another 3-pointer by Laettner with 11:05 left gave the Blue Devils a 46-39 lead, and they took off from there.

"The second half, we had no semblance of order on offense," Michigan coach Steve Fisher said.

## 1992 baseball season starts with 'Play ball'

The Baltimore Orioles were in a new stadium and World Series star Jack Morris was in a new uniform, but the 1992 baseball season began with the same familiar cry: "Play ball!"

Detroit's Tiger Stadium was the scene for the first game of the year, and Morris, now a Toronto Blue Jay, picked up right where he left off last year for the Minnesota Twins.

Morris, who ended last year by shutting out the Atlanta Braves in the seventh game of the World Series, threw eight shutout innings as the Blue Jays beat Detroit 4-2.

"This is not the World Series," Morris said after returning to the city where he spent 13 years pitching for the Tigers. "Opening day is more festive."

Toronto's Devon White fouled off the season's first pitch from Bill Gullickson. Four minutes later, the first run was scored when 40-year-old Dave Winfield singled for the Blue Jays.

Elsewhere, President Bush bounced the ceremonial first pitch in the dirt at Baltimore's brand-new stadium, Oriole Park at Camden Yards. Orioles pitcher Rick Sutcliffe had better luck, pitching a 2-0 shutout against Cleveland.

Sutcliffe and Morris were two of several top names to switch teams in an off-season marked by spiraling salaries. There are now 271 millionaires in the majors — 38 percent of all players — pushing the average contract to more than \$1 million for the first time.

The Milwaukee Brewers and Philadelphia Phillies unveiled new uniforms. Detroit had new radio announcers as Rick Rizzs and Bob Rathbun replaced the legendary Ernie Harwell and Paul Carey.

"There is no other event in professional sports that compares with opening day," Rathbun said. "Nobody gets this excited about the first game of football season. ... This is a special day."

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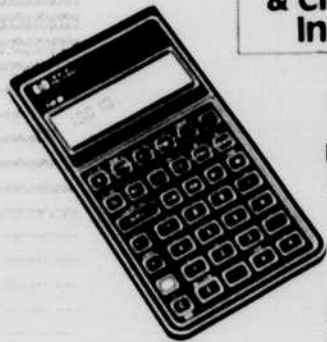
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