



2018-19 DUKE BASKETBALL
CLIPS FILE

Duke's Zion Williamson talks dunks, his fame and learning from Coach K

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (August 8, 2018)

DURHAM -- His reputation as a superior athlete preceded Zion Williamson's arrival on Duke's campus this summer.

He's the kid from South Carolina with all those dunk videos online. Check out YouTube, where highlight packages of the 6-7, 285-pound Williamson's dunks are approaching 2 million page views.

His teammates are now seeing what all the fuss is about.

"I've never seen an athlete like him," Duke junior guard Jack White said. "He just turned 18, what three or four weeks ago? The maturity he has physically and just how he is as a person handling the spotlight being on him with social media. Pretty much everywhere he goes, people are trying to track him down and get photos. It's a lot for an 18 year old kid."

Williamson and the rest of the nation's No. 1 recruiting class have joined Duke's returning players for their offseason work.

They've played pickup games and gone through individual drills with coaches. They held a scouting combine-style testing event at the K Center practice facility. Williamson wowed his teammates with a stunning vertical leap that, predictably, immediately went viral on the internet.

Because the device used to calculate the vertical leap had to be put on top of some stacked weights in order to raise it higher, no one at Duke is really certain exactly how high Williamson leaped, although it was estimated at 45 inches.

That puts him in the neighborhood of celebrated leapers like Michael Jordan (46 inches), David Thompson (44 inches) and Vince Carter (43 inches).

Either way, Duke refers to the jump as a new program record.

The newest version of the Blue Devils is now practicing in preparation for a trip to Canada next week, where Duke will play three exhibition games against Canadian university teams.

That trip will allow R.J. Barrett, the top-rated player in the freshman class, to return to his home country. Cam Reddish and Williamson were rated just below Barrett, giving Duke the nation's top three incoming freshmen.

Williamson, though, is a lightning rod of attention who stands out even among this ultra-talented group.

Ever since his junior season at Spartanburg Day School, when his viral dunk videos started making their way around the internet and he was rated among the top recruits in the country, Williamson had relinquished the chance to be a normal teenager.

Where people in public used to refer to him by his jersey number earlier in his high school career, they now knew his name.

"I could never go anywhere without people going, 'Are you Zion?'" Williamson said during an interview with The News & Observer on Tuesday. "It was no longer No. 12. It was, are you Zion? Can I get a picture? I would go somewhere away from here thinking nobody would know who I am. And it would be 'Do I know you from somewhere?'"

It hasn't stopped even on Duke's campus, a place which houses some of the nation's top basketball players every year. The campus is crawling with teenage visitors this summer attending the different athletic and academic camps the school hosts.

Walking to class or to the cafeteria to grab lunch brings Williamson more requests for photos.

"I'm enjoying myself," Williamson said. "It's never too much for me to stand there and take a picture. If I've got to get to class, I mean, I've got to get to class. But I'm enjoying myself. Nothing is really bothering me."

Something that happened back in South Carolina did stand out, though. While visiting Columbia, S.C., for a school event, Williamson went to grab a sandwich for lunch. The next week, he said, a video someone took from far away of him getting lunch was posted on the internet.

"I don't even remember that person being there," Williamson said. "Yeah, here's Zion here in Columbia at Subway. I'm like, wow. It's really come to that. It's kind of phenomenal."

While dealing with all that hype, Williamson is trying to learn basketball at a higher level. He's glad to be playing for Duke's Mike Krzyzewski, the Hall of Fame coach who is the sport's all-time wins leader.

"He's been through so much," Williamson said. "His intelligence for the game is off the charts. I honestly wish more people could see how he thinks the game through. He could draw up a real simple play and you'd be like, 'that play is not going to work.' And it will be wide open and you'll see the game is so simple."

It hasn't taken long, but Williamson has already learned another important lesson about how his dunks will fit into his play at Duke.

"If it's there it's there, but this is college, not high school anymore," Williamson said. "I can't afford to do the highlight dunk and miss it because, if I do that, I'll be sitting right on the bench beside the coaches. So if it's there and we have a reasonable lead, maybe. But, if not, two points, get back on defense."

His friends wanted to raise a dying man's spirits. Coach K did that and more.

By Steve Wiseman, Raleigh News & Observer (August 5, 2018)

DURHAM -- What started as hope for a note from Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski became one phone call, then two.

In the end, the Jimmy V Foundation gained at least \$45,000 to fund cancer research.

A dying Illinois man who counted the Duke Blue Devils among his favorite teams had persistent friends, who got word to Krzyzewski about his dire situation.

Known by his nickname of "Flako" around the central Illinois town of Lincoln where he was renowned for his community involvement, Feldman was asleep when his wife received the unexpected call from Krzyzewski. Teena Feldman said her husband would be happy to be awakened to take the call, but Krzyzewski insisted she not wake him. Krzyzewski promised to call back later, saying he'd call as many times as needed so he could talk him.

Around three hours later, he did, and Flako Feldman was awake to take the call. The two spoke for nearly 30 minutes, and Krzyzewski encouraged the retired Illinois Department of Corrections worker to keep fighting against the cancer. He followed that up with a handwritten note in the mail a few days later.

Todd Lowman, Flako Feldman's close friend, said his ailing friend called him after he hung up with Krzyzewski.

"We had our usual banter back and forth," Lowman said. "Then he said, 'You're not going to believe who I just talked to. Coach K.' He was crying. I was crying. I asked him what they talked about, and he said he didn't remember because he was still kind of in shock."

Less than two weeks later, on July 25 at the age of 61, Feldman died at his home with his wife and daughters by his side.

"At that point," Lowman said, "Flako was starting to fail pretty quickly. But whenever you mentioned the Coach K conversation, he perked right up and wanted to talk about it. It just meant the world to him. You don't understand what this did for him."

The call from Krzyzewski happened only because Feldman's friends decided to reach out to Duke to see if Krzyzewski could send a note of encouragement. Through a chance meeting with a retired Southeast Missouri State track coach who knew Duke athletic director Kevin White, they were able to get an email to White, who passed the information on to Krzyzewski.

Rather than send the note, Krzyzewski's executive assistant Gerry Brown reached out to Lowman, who had initiated contact with White, to get Feldman's phone numbers.

The next day, Krzyzewski called the Feldman house and eventually spoke to Greg Feldman.

After his death, Feldman's friends decided to honor him by organizing a fundraiser for the Jimmy V Foundation, because Krzyzewski has been a board member since its founding.

When the local Woods Foundation agreed to match donations up to \$10,000, Feldman's friends set that as their goal. Through a Knights of Columbus event at the local county fair the night of Feldman's funeral last Wednesday, they were able to top that.

"I wasn't sure how it was going to all play out," Lowman said. "It did provide kind of a little levity and a little bit of a celebration mode for what had been a pretty grueling seven months for the family, and those of us that were with him, the last couple of weeks. Teena spoke and gave a very elegant, very nice 3-4 minute speech. She said the phone call from Coach K was by far the brightest part of that 7-month battle. We're all Duke fans now."

The total raised so far is \$45,000. Donations are still being accepted at http://jimmyv.convio.net/site/TR/DIY/General?pg=team&fr_id=1430&team_id=2660.

Family business: Another Jones takes over at PG for Duke

By Joedy McCreary, AP (July 26, 2018)

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) – Tre Jones wants to do what big brother Tyus did – lead Duke to a national championship.

The Blue Devils' newest point guard is embracing the chance to making a name for himself while playing for a program that still reveres his brother, the Most Outstanding Player at the 2015 Final Four.

"Everything I've done in my life has been after him anyway," Tre Jones said in an interview with The Associated Press. "So coming here is just another thing that I'm doing that's just following him."

That's why Tre Jones doesn't view his situation at Duke as a challenge but as an opportunity to put the lessons he learned from Tyus to good use.

"It's a challenge, for sure, if you look at it (from the outside), but me just going through it, I don't look at it as a challenge," Tre said. "It's really just a blessing that he was able to come here before he and do what he did, and I'm able to learn from all the things he's been through, and he goes through, and implement them in my daily life to try to make myself better as well."

Tyus Jones averaged 11.8 points and 5.6 assists during his only college season, which he finished by cutting down the nets after a national title. His two big 3-pointers helped propel the Blue Devils past Wisconsin in the final. He was later drafted in the first round and wound up traded to his hometown team, the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Four seasons later, it's his little brother's turn to run the point for a Duke team that once again will be dominated by potential one-and-done freshmen. They will get their first taste of college basketball next month when the Blue Devils play three exhibition games in Canada.

The physical similarities are obvious: The natives of Apple Valley, Minnesota, are both 6-foot-1 with similar frames and a strong physical resemblance to each other.

But Tyus says his brother is a more developed player than he was at his age, and Hall of Fame coach Mike Krzyzewski says Tre has a bit more athleticism. Tre Jones nearly averaged a triple-double as a high school junior and averaged 22.9 points, 8.9 rebounds and 6.3 assists as a senior.

"They're both very cerebral and they're involved in every play, mentally and physically," Krzyzewski said. "The ultimate 'next-play' guys."

Tre Jones says Duke was always his dream school as a kid, even before Tyus committed to the Blue Devils, and Tyus encouraged his brother to tune out the distraction of those family comparisons. Their older brother Jadee played at Furman in the 2000s before transferring to Minnesota State-Mankato.

Tyus said he told his younger brother to "just continue doing what he was doing, which was not paying attention to it, making his own path and just focusing on it and on his career. ... I said, 'No matter where you go, there's going to be comparisons with family. That's just how it goes. So just go where you feel is the best fit for you.'"

Both brothers came to Duke as part of talented freshman classes. Tyus Jones had been friends with teammate Jahlil Okafor since they were pre-teens, but Tre doesn't really have quite that kind of pre-existing relationship with any of his classmates, though he has known teammate Cam Reddish since AAU ball.

He said they joined fellow five-star freshmen R.J. Barrett and Zion Williamson in a group text during their high school seasons to build that friendship.

"It's been amazing so far, being able to make Duke my new home," Jones said. "My brother being here before, I was real familiar with a lot of the things that go on around here, but I mean, to actually step foot on campus and having this be my new home, you just find out a lot more things and I'm just having a lot of fun and (have gotten) a lot better over the past few months, and looking forward to keep pushing forward and keep getting better."

How reclassification fast-tracks top prospects to college and the NBA

By Jeff Borzello, ESPN (July 24, 2018)

Constructing a college basketball roster generally consists of a combination of recruiting, attrition (graduation, defections, NBA draft departures) and transfers.

Another factor that is emerging is reclassification, in which top prospects graduate high school a year early to enter college. It's a trend that is upending the recruiting calendar and changing the way programs assemble their rosters.

In August, Marvin Bagley III announced he was reclassifying into the 2017 class to attend Duke, making the Blue Devils the preseason No. 1. Last month, Charles Bassey, a five-star forward in the 2019 class, announced he would reclassify to the 2018 class and commit to Western Kentucky.

"I think a lot of them are thinking, I can get to the league [NBA] a year faster," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "I think some are thinking, if I can be a freshman in college with the access to training and that kind of stuff, would I be better off postponing that a year? I think in some situations, it's a very worthwhile thought."

Reclassifying is a more familiar occurrence in football. In basketball, it has traditionally been the domain of prospects from New England prep schools, where it's more common for students to repeat an academic year. NCAA eligibility requires prospects to have completed 16 core courses, with 10 finished by the time they enter their seventh semester of high school.

"Probably over a quarter of the population, when they do matriculate to [New England] boarding schools, they do repeat a grade," said Jason Smith, the head coach at Brewster Academy in New Hampshire. "The general population, not just athletes. They want to get into a more competitive [college]. When they come to a boarding school, the curriculum is that much more demanding. It allows them to take the next course in succession."

It meant players could repeat a grade and be a year older during the latter portion of their high school career and then reclassify back into their original class when they were ready to graduate. Players like Andre Drummond (UConn, 2011), Nerlens Noel (Kentucky, 2012), Wayne Selden (Kansas, 2013) and Noah Vonleh (Indiana, 2013) have followed this route.

Reclassifying is also common among Canadian prospects, whose academic calendar allows them to complete their core courses earlier than their American counterparts. Andrew Wiggins reclassified in 2013, moving back into his original class after leaving Canada to play at Huntington Prep in West Virginia. Jamal Murray reclassified in June of his junior season in 2015 after several months of debate, and R.J. Barrett, the nation's top incoming freshman, decided last summer to move from 2019 to 2018.

But it's becoming a popular trend for top prospects across the country.

Kentucky (Ashton Hagans, No. 20 in ESPN 100) and Duke (Joey Baker, No. 41 in ESPN 100) have each added players who reclassified into the 2018 class. D.J. Burns (No. 82 in ESPN 100) moved into the 2018 class after committing to Tennessee, as did A.J. Lawson (South Carolina) and Kevin McCullar (Texas Tech). Speculation that 2019 five-star prospects James Wiseman and Jalen Lecque would do the same has been a source of intrigue during their recruitments.

This weekend saw two more high-level reclassifications: Five-star guard Nico Mannion moved up from the 2020 class to 2019, and ESPN 100 Oregon commit Francis Okoro decided to enroll this fall instead of waiting a year.

"The year I'm supposed to be in high school, I'm using it to get better," Okoro said of his decision to join the Ducks this fall. "College workouts are way different than high school workouts. For me, development is a really, really huge thing for me. I talked to the coaches and they said if I come in, they're going to use that one year to really work with me."

Reclassification offers a mutual benefit for player and program. Departures via transfer or the NBA draft can leave coaches scrambling for players once the season ends, when much of the recruiting work is done for that year's class. It also allows programs to be creative in their recruiting. Getting a player in a year earlier than expected could let a program recruit another player in that position without as much conflict.

Oregon coach Dana Altman has found success through reclassification prior to Okoro. Dillon Brooks committed to the Ducks in August 2014 after reclassifying and went on to become a key contributor during Oregon's Final Four run in 2017. Altman expects Okoro to make an impact this season.

"Both those young men felt they were ready for college," Altman said. "With the one-and-done, your team's always sort of in transition, always trying to figure out who's going to be there, who's going to make the jump. You're always trying to develop players, help them meet their goals. You always know there are going to be holes to fill on your team."

Reclassifying offers a quicker path to the NBA, but many players also point to the benefit of being able to work out and train against better players in a college environment.

"I felt like going into Duke, it would force me to grow quicker than any other situation," Baker said. "That played a big role into it. I'm going to be practicing, traveling, learning, in the weight room, getting better. Redshirt or not, it's a win-win for me and the team."

There's another major factor for many prospects deciding to reclassify: age. With the NBA showing how much it values room for development, players don't want to be 22 years old when they enter the draft.

"I'm already 18. Why should I wait to graduate when I'm almost 19?" Okoro said. "For those that started school late, it helps you be in a good age. You want to be in the NBA, if you graduate high school at 19 or 20, you're still going to be the same age as juniors already. NBA always talks about age, they always talk about how young you are. It's really important to go in at a good age. I think everybody should think about it. ... The age thing just came up. You just look at it, you see some people still in high school, people are already 19, 20. It still hurts you in the draft."

"Analytics value it," one NBA executive said. "All their models are based on what's happened in the past, and in the past, usually your best players have come out early. That's why it predicts in the future, most of your best players will come out younger. ... You're enamored with the future, because you haven't seen a lot. Is he going to grow more, what's he going to do when he gains 25 pounds? You're filling in the blanks some with your imagination, and that helps the guys."

Kentucky has benefited as much as any program through reclassification, including Noel, Murray, Karl-Anthony Towns, Dakari Johnson, Hamidou Diallo and now Hagans, but John Calipari said it's not for everyone.

"If you're not mentally mature enough or physically ready, why would you reclassify?" Calipari told the Louisville Courier-Journal. "Your body will tell you, and then your family should know your mind. You're setting somebody up for failure if you're mentally not ready to go into that man's world. ... Are you ready to be professional? And if you're not, get yourself ready so you can make it."

Self agreed. "In many situations, you're trying to put growing up and maturing in fast-forward, which I don't think is good," he said.

Another factor at play could be the risk of overexposure. In some cases, players and coaches think the more time scouts have to evaluate a prospect, the higher the chance they're going to poke holes in their game. The earlier a player can get eligible for the NBA draft, the better.

"When parents and AAU coaches say it to me, I interpret it as fear of overexposing their kids," an NBA executive said. "That's not really how it works. I understand what kids and parents and mentors are thinking. I get that game. What they'll try to kid themselves on is that's not the game they're playing: I'm getting my career started early so that I can make the most money."

The trend doesn't appear to be ending anytime soon, especially as long as the NBA maintains an age requirement. Talent will find creative ways to get to the NBA. Recently, Thon Maker and Anfernee Simons reclassified back a year and did a post-graduate year of high school to go straight to the draft. As the NBA deliberates over changing the one-and-done rule within the next couple of years, we might see more prospects move up a class to be in the first group that's able to skip college.

"Options are good, but certainly five years ago, you didn't see the reclass stuff like you do right now," Self said. "I don't know if it's good or bad."

But it's not for every prospect. Some will still choose their final year in high school. Kentucky commit Tyrese Maxey (No. 7 in ESPN 100) considered reclassifying and playing this season with the Wildcats, but ultimately decided to remain with his 2019 class.

"I felt like it was best for me," Maxey said earlier this month. "I wanted to go back to high school for one last year, have fun with my teammates. You work so hard your whole life, trying to make [the McDonald's] game and get those accolades. To have a chance to do that, you want to see if you can accomplish those things. I didn't want to rush into it. It was kind of abrupt. I've waited my whole life, might as well wait one more year and do the fun things you get to do as a senior."

Duke's Brennan Besser bikes across America for a worthy cause

By Myron Medcalf, ESPN.com (July 18, 2018)

It wasn't until Duke walk-on Brennan Besser approached New York City on Tuesday, completing a cross-country bike ride to raise money for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD), that he reflected on what he'd achieved.

He didn't want the emotions attached to his fundraising effort, which included free basketball clinics at every stop, to disrupt the flow of his 3,400-mile trek.

Besser's 23-year-old sister, Jacqueline, has autism and is nonverbal with limited motor skills. She's also the inspiration for the political science major's effort with his charitable foundation "Walk On! America" to raise \$1 million for people like her who demand vital resources that allow them to live fruitful lives.

Besser's family is working on a plan that will help Jacqueline when she leaves home. Besser is from Chicago, and in Illinois, public funding for members of the IDD community stops when they turn 21, a fact that prompted Besser to come up with the idea of a bike ride.

"We now are focusing on making sure that her future will be secured," Besser said. "And that, of course, brought into the conversation the fact that we're not the only family going through these types of challenges and trying to figure these things out. It was really like the perfect marriage of 'How can I raise awareness?' We have firsthand experience with my sister. We are part of the IDD community. How can I leverage this platform and really give back on a national level?"

According to the Walk On America website, Besser has raised more than \$343,000 toward his goal. He said the funds will go back to organizations that support members of the IDD community.

Initially, he favored a cross-country run. He ran a mile in 5 minutes, 5 seconds when he was a sophomore at Duke, a mark he said is posted atop the program's all-time list in the weight room.

To test that idea, he awoke one morning before the trip and just started running. He wanted to see how much ground he could cover in one stretch. After covering 24.5 miles, nearly a marathon, he began to rethink his mission.

"Then I stopped on the side of the road, called my parents," he said. "I couldn't feel my legs. I said, 'You know what, I don't think running is going to work, but let's try to figure out what we can do to make this thing work.' Then the bike became the vehicle that would get me across the country. It would still garner some attention for the fact that it's physically challenging but would allow us to connect with as many people in as many towns as possible with the time frame I have before I have to get back to school."

His trek began in May on a balmy day in Seattle. He covered nearly 60 miles per day, traversing more than a dozen states while spreading his message about the IDD community.

He met celebrities such as former Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka. He posed for photos with Montana Gov. Steve Bullock. He spoke to locals at a small lodge in Wisconsin. He toured the White House. And Tuesday, he rang the opening bell at the NASDAQ stock exchange.

The senior, who's appeared in two career games for the Blue Devils, had the support of head coach Mike Krzyzewski and several of his teammates. Portland Trail Blazers guard Gary Trent Jr., a second-round pick in June's NBA draft, called and offered support, reminding Besser to "just remember who you're doing it for when it gets really challenging."

"Brennan has contributed in so many ways to our program, whether it be in preparation, spirit, or work-ethic -- he's a one-of-a-kind walk-on," Krzyzewski said in a statement in May. "I love him, and the spirit he brings is infectious on this team. Nothing he does surprises me, because almost everything he does is not about him. It's about his talents, his emotion and his effort to help others. This is a terrific thing that he's doing this summer and he'll accomplish so much for so many people."

Brennan Besser is a senior walk-on at Duke.

Besser also credits a support team that included a family friend and Rachel Besser -- his sister, who owns a fashion line -- following him on the trip in a pair of support vehicles. A cousin helped, too. A project manager worked at the organization's home base in Chicago. A pair of Milwaukee-based doctors biked part of the trip.

He endured minor obstacles such as a broken chain on a rocky road and a popped tire on an uphill climb during another rugged stretch. The worst unfolded last week in Washington, D.C., when someone broke into one of the support vehicles and stole a camera his team had used to document the trip.

"We've been successful," Besser said. "But there are just things you can't plan for, and we have a good enough team here where we're just trying to adapt on the go."

Besser's mission goes beyond money. He also hopes to eliminate the stigma attached to the IDD community.

Those with disabilities deserve to be embraced, not exiled. Besser said if people took more time to develop relationships with people in the IDD community, they'd learn that they share more similarities with them than differences.

At one stop at the Children's Hospital in Milwaukee, he spoke to members of the IDD community who've worked with a hospital-sponsored project to attain employment. One young man who is employed by the hospital told Besser to take a message around the country.

"He said, 'I would just want you to please tell everyone that all we want as a community is to be given the chance to prove that we can succeed, and if we're given that chance, we will.' I still get chills thinking about it because it was so powerful."

This is a blue-collar effort for Besser, who could have done less to shine a light on his cause. He's connected to one of the most successful programs in college basketball history and a network of athletes who've excelled within and outside basketball.

He could have called them all and just asked for a tweet or an Instagram post.

Instead, however, Besser chose the grueling bike ride so he could meet and connect with people face-to-face.

"Coach K uses basketball as a vehicle to teach leadership skills and life principles," he said. "And the bike ride, what I'm doing, is simply a vessel trying to raise awareness, and we have this million-dollar goal for this community. There are days that are tough, tougher than others. And that really helps me push through. ... I don't know if it has hit me yet that I've biked across the country."

A re-energized Krzyzewski and a loaded freshman class make for a lethal combination at Duke

By CL Brown, The Athletic (June 28, 2018)

DURHAM, N.C. - The unprecedented coup of landing the top three rated players in the Class of 2018 has understandably generated a lot of buzz at Duke. But it's not the most meaningful reason why the Blue Devils should be charged up about this season. After all, on paper they've had arguably the best or second-best recruiting class in each of the past three seasons, bringing in the likes of Brandon Ingram (2015), Jayson Tatum (2016) and Marvin Bagley III (2017). Yet for all of the hype that came with those signings, Duke has exactly one banner to show for it. No one in Durham is celebrating that 2017 ACC title either because it was followed by an upset loss to South Carolina in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

The difference this season, the real reason why Duke's considerable class could fulfill its considerable potential, is that the man who runs the program finally feels healthy again. Coach Mike Krzyzewski, who last season surpassed 1,000 wins at Duke, has had six surgeries since April 2016. Before he had the surgeries, he simply dealt with the pain of the ailment, and as the head coach of USA Basketball's national team, he didn't really have a lot of time to pause for his own health. All that's changed now. With no retirement plans in sight, Krzyzewski, 71, is as energized for a season as he has been in a while.

"When you're not doing things naturally or you're inhibited from doing things you would normally do as a coach on the court, it wears you out," he says. "The sobering occurs when you haven't taken care of it. Oh, I can't walk right. I'm tired. When you get them all fixed and you do the right rehab, you start saying, 'Now I'm good. I'm really good right now. I'm as mobile and as healthy as I've been in 10 years.'"

Before the start of last season, the Blue Devils were scheduled to take a summer trip to the Dominican Republic. It was supposed to mark the first time since 2006 that Krzyzewski didn't have USA Basketball obligations and could devote his entire summer to his program. With four freshmen starters, the Blue Devils would have had 10 additional practices to get acclimated to one other and the coaching staff in addition to playing organized games. But Krzyzewski acquiesced to knee replacement surgery, and Duke canceled the trip. That, of course, doesn't show up in the record books, but who knows if the trip would have had a positive effect on the team and the season. Bagley had committed to Duke just two days before the trip was scheduled, so things might have played out the same way. Even then, the Blue Devils were one tantalizing Grayson Allen miss in the Elite Eight from reaching the Final Four.

Instead, Duke is looking to return to the tournament's final weekend for the first time since cutting down the nets in 2015 with a comparable freshman class, which included the No. 1 overall player (Jahlil Okafor) from the Class of 2014. Since then, Krzyzewski has missed at least one game in each of the past three seasons for health reasons. In February 2016 he stayed behind in Durham before the Blue Devils' victory at Georgia Tech. He missed seven games in January 2017 after having a fragment of a herniated disc removed. It conjured up images from the 1994-95 season when Krzyzewski missed the final 19 games of the season with a bad back and Pete Gaudet served as the acting head coach. That was the last time Duke missed the NCAA Tournament and the last time it had a losing record. This season Krzyzewski was sidelined by a virus for a Jan. 13 win against Wake Forest. (Then associate head coach Jeff Capel, who is now the coach at Pittsburgh, filled in for Krzyzewski and posted a 6-3 record.)

"Obviously no one is indestructible or anything like that," says Krzyzewski. "I think the only thing that is indestructible is attitude. I have a good attitude, and you're more likely to have a good attitude if you're healthy because then you're in the process of doing and accomplishing instead of coping while you're trying to accomplish. The coping thing has been taken off the plate, which is great, and now you can just go for it. I feel younger and better than I have in 10 years, really."

These young Blue Devils figure to benefit from that exuberance, as Krzyzewski could again start four freshmen. Point guard Tre Jones, R.J. Barrett, the top-rated player in the Class of 2018, Cam Reddish, the No. 2 player in the class, and Zion Williamson, the third-ranked player, all should push for a starting spot. Krzyzewski says this team is poised to be a better passing unit than last season.

"(Jones) is a guy the ball doesn't stick in his hands much, and wherever it goes after he has it is almost always good," Krzyzewski says. "He doesn't pound the ball, so that gives an opportunity for R.J., Zion, Cameron. Those three kids, they're good basketball players and they can play all over the court and they can complement (each other)."

Joey Baker could be the wild card in the class. The 6-foot-7 forward from Fayetteville, N.C., initially was in the Class of 2019, but he decided to reclassify. Krzyzewski says Baker approached the coaching staff about moving up a year. It makes sense for Baker even if he doesn't play much or at all next season, as he wasn't likely to improve much playing another season against high school competition. Baker was invited to try out for USA Basketball's under-18 team that competed in the FIBA Americas championships, but he did not make the 12-man roster. (Williamson was also invited, but he declined so he could get an early start at Duke.) Krzyzewski has hinted that Baker, rated a top-50 player by ESPN.com, could redshirt this season.

"If he's not completely ready for the future, it'd be nice if we had guys who were here for a while to keep developing," Krzyzewski says. "It'd be nice to have that mix; in fact, it'd be really nice to have that mix."

These Blue Devils could employ more of Krzyzewski's signature man-to-man defense than they played the past few years. Last season Duke played mostly zone. Yes, it had the length to be effective with Bagley, Wendell Carter Jr. and Gary Trent Jr. stretched out from baseline to baseline. But it was more of an admission that the Blue Devils weren't that good playing man defense. Duke has effectively played zone defense in each of the past four seasons, dating to the championship season. However, that isn't what has defined the program during the Krzyzewski era. He'd prefer to play straight up man-to-man, and he believes he now has the personnel to pull it off. Reddish, Barrett and Williamson are essentially interchangeable in the frontcourt and could possibly switch on every screen. Last season opponents pulled Bagley and Carter out on the perimeter.

"We just had too many big guys running all over the court, and our communication wasn't as good in (man) because it was so new for the big guys," Krzyzewski says.

That's not to suggest that Duke is scrapping the zone. "I think we learned how to coach it well, and I think we'll do a bunch of things on defense," Krzyzewski says, "but man will be our primary one. It could be a switching one with the players we have."

Juniors Marques Bolden and Javin DeLaurier in the frontcourt and sophomore guard Alex O'Connell all return, but the lack of experience is another reason why Krzyzewski's renewed vigor matters more. The trio hasn't been in leadership positions at Duke, and the program's only two seniors - Antonio Vrankovic and walk-on Brennan Besser - have only played sparingly. That's why Krzyzewski is in no hurry to name team captains. He wants to see who will emerge when the intensity cranks up. He'll get an early glimpse, as Duke will take the summer trip it canceled last season with three games planned in Toronto and Montreal in August.

The players are clamoring for the chance to start early. Jones, whose brother Tyus started at point guard on the 2015 title team, says it will "be a big one for bonding on the floor." Tyus Jones has drawn similarities between the unity of his class, which included Okafor, Allen and Justise Winslow before the 2014-15 season. Reddish says Tre Jones is a big reason why this group is so close-knit, as he was the first in the class to commit.

"Everybody here is really unselfish, so that'll really help us going into the season," Reddish says. "Everybody here is really competitive and really hard working, ready to get to it."

Starting with the head coach.

R.J. Barrett is Canada Basketball's next great hope

By Eric Koreen, The Athletic (June 27, 2018)

Steve Nash is a pretty smart guy, which means coincidence is rarely on the table when it comes to his decision-making. Nash took over as the general manager of Canada's men's senior national team in May 2012. His sense of timing was on point.

Cory Joseph and Tristan Thompson had just finished their first NBA seasons, and a parade of Canadians would follow them: Andrew Nicholson, Anthony Bennett, Kelly Olynyk, Andrew Wiggins, Nik Stauskas and so on. A few months after his appointment, Nash re-hired Jay Triano to be the team's head coach. Shortly after that, the team held something of a program orientation, getting as much talent into the Air Canada Centre as possible.

While most of the buzz in the gym surrounded kids that were either in or nearing the NBA, there was also an intriguing 12-year-old getting some shots up at the time.

"We had a bunch of people come into the gym," Triano remembered on Wednesday. "We brought ... (Bennett) in for the first time, and all the young players were in. And then (R.J. Barrett) came in to work with Steve at the other end of the court. He and Steve were working together at the other end, and we were just like 'OK, he's got a chance to be really good.' And sure enough, he's just kept getting better and better and better."

"He had feet that couldn't fit his body," Joseph added of the first time he saw Barrett play. "He had big floppers, running around, flopping around with his feet. He was always talented. I just remember his dad putting him through drills and working with him and always playing with the older guys for countless hours. He loved the gym, loved to work."

Fast forward six years, and Barrett is front and centre with the program. While Joseph and Olynyk have morphed into the team's elder statesmen and Wiggins and Jamal Murray, assuming they find the time at some point, are the country's most accomplished NBA players, Barrett is the next player to have a crack at stardom. He will attend Duke in the upcoming season, and, if everything goes according to plan, should be the top pick in next June's draft.

His resumé at this point is impossibly long. His prep school, Monteverde Academy, just finished an undefeated season. He has won a collection of MVP awards, including at last summer's under-19 World Cup, with Barrett having just turned 17. The tournament was Canada's first gold medal in a FIBA world tournament. He was the leading scorer for Canada over two exhibitions against China last week, and will make his debut in meaningful games for the senior team over the long weekend, starting with Friday night's game in Toronto against the Dominican Republic – assuming Triano does not cut him, which is verging on an impossible scenario.

Much as was the case with Wiggins and Murray when they debuted for Canada at precocious stages of their careers, the raves are pouring in for Barrett. Barrett is nominally left-handed, but is right-hand dominant in other aspects of his life, giving him a level of comfort driving to either side. He has excellent size and athleticism for his age, too. With his father, Rowan, having served as Nash's right-hand man as both a player and now with the senior team, he has also had the requisite education in the game.

"He's a freak athletically," Olynyk said. "He's got a little ways to go, but he's gonna be real good. He sees the game really well, has a vast skill set –

which is gonna help him. ... Right now he's an unbelievable player, but if he makes everyone around him that much better, he's gonna be one of those guys who's unstoppable and a franchise person who's at a high level for basketball."

"I think he's extremely coachable," Triano said. "He's got a competitiveness in him that he wants to be good, so anything we ask of him or we tell him, he takes it in and he applies it. He spends a lot of time getting better and he's had good coaching in the past, and he seems very open to coaching."

He is about to get a lot of it – from Triano, from Mike Krzyzewski and from whoever his first NBA coach winds up being. The noise around Barrett has been loud for a few years, and could become deafening as we get closer and closer to the 2019 draft. We need only look to the previous Canadian to be drafted first overall, Wiggins, to see how a plan for superstardom can go awry, although there is still plenty of time for the Timberwolves swingman to change the narrative of his early career.

Each chance Barrett has to go up against older players is a chance, then, to better prepare for that next step. Barrett has already shown that he can flourish competing against players his own age. Canada's roster of 17 includes seven players with NBA experience, and several more who have carved out solid professional careers.

"The biggest things about the guys who have been in the league for a while is they slow down and kind of let the game come to them," Olynyk said. "You can't speed them up, you can't make them do anything they don't want to do. Whether it's take a shot or go quickly or whatever it is you can't speed anybody up. So if it's an all-star or a pro, they're gonna do whatever they want to do every single night, get the shots they want to get and you're gonna have to live and die by what they want."

"It comes with playing games and playing guys at the highest level, and playing guys who are just as fast, strong, quick, bigger. You've gotta use your IQ, you've gotta use your body, your IQ, your stuff from the game. You've gotta slow down, make sure you're taking what they give you, and that'll come. That'll come with experience and more games, and more games at a high level."

"Especially my first day or two, I was going really fast, trying to catch up," Barrett said of Olynyk's observation, and the overall pace of Canada's practices. "But now that I've been here for a week and a bit, I'm starting to slow down, starting to just try to play."

Barrett said he enjoys watching LeBron James the most, which is the obvious choice. It is James' mental dissection of his defence, and his physical ability to make any pass at any time, that Barrett appreciates the most.

James, obviously, is the gold standard for all players. That Barrett draws inspiration from him is noble, but does not make him unique. That he has the skill and, apparently, the drive to potentially be able to mimic part of James' game in the future is what makes him special.

"I think when we've watched his progression over the last couple years, we've known that he was gonna be part of the national team and he was gonna have a great basketball career in front of him," Triano said. "The fact that it's happening now is good for us."

Tre Jones plans to surpass his title-winning big brother at Duke, and that's fine by Tyus

By CL Brown, The Athletic (June 13, 2018)

DURHAM, N.C. – As talented and stacked as Duke's recent recruiting classes have been, coach Mike Krzyzewski has never truly found a replacement at point guard for Tyus Jones, who left after his freshman season in 2015. To be clear, Jones had a season that exceeded even his own high expectations, which made leaving for the NBA a no-brainer.

His 5.6 assists per game ranked second in the ACC and his 2.86 assist-to-turnover ratio was 19th nationally. Beyond the numbers, Jones had a knack for delivering in big moments. It started with the Blue Devils' first road game at Wisconsin, and Jones would lead his team to wins at Virginia and in overtime against North Carolina. His dream season culminated as the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player after he scored 23 points in Duke's national championship game win over Wisconsin. It's hard to envision having a career that could improve upon that season. But if it's possible, Jones would like his brother, Tre, to be the one to do it.

"I want him to be ahead of the curve, I want him to surpass everything I did, that's just how it is with your family," Tyus says. "I would agree he's further along than I was, and I want him to just continue on that path. Obviously, there's always the friendly competition and things of that nature, but it's all motivating and trying to help him as much as I can."

Tre Jones is considered one of the best point guards in the Class of 2018 and is arguably the least talked about recruit in the Blue Devils' No. 1-ranked haul, but he may also be the most important. Duke hasn't had a pure point guard since Tyus left. Derryck Thornton reclassified to join the 2016 class, but he found the transition difficult and transferred to USC after one season. Frank Jackson, who was more of a combination guard, didn't fully acclimate to being a playmaker in his one year on campus. This season, Trevon Duval was more comfortable as a scoring point guard than as a distributor. He left for the NBA after his freshman year.

In Tre Jones, the Blue Devils possess more of a pass-first point guard. And thanks to Tyus, Krzyzewski believes Tre is ahead of where Tyus was as a freshman. Krzyzewski says Tre is more athletic than his brother and more of a penetrator. At 6-foot-2, 183 pounds, he's slightly bigger than Tyus was as a freshman (6-foot-1, 171 pounds). Tyus is the better shooter, but Tre did have six 3-pointers in the Minnesota state title game. Krzyzewski says they both pass ahead of the play well.

"They're involved in every play mentally and physically," Krzyzewski says. "The ultimate, next play guys."

Tre knows the comparisons are coming. They never really stopped, to be honest. He shares an uncanny physical resemblance with his brother, who is four years his senior. Those bushy eyebrows and the infectious smile are the first links that make people ask him if he and Tyus are related – and just wait until he puts on a Duke jersey for the first time.

Tre took the same path to college as his brother, playing varsity as an eighth grader at Apple Valley High School outside of Minneapolis. He stuck around for five years instead of transferring to a higher-profile prep school and helped the Eagles win two state titles along the way. And now on the same campus where Tyus started at point guard and helped lead the Blue Devils to a national title, Tre will try to do the same thing.

"People say I follow in his footsteps, but it's always been my dream school coming here," Tre says. "Playing for Coach K has always been a dream of mine as well, I just feel like it was the best fit for myself. Just choosing to come here I felt like I'll have the best chance to win a national championship, and that's my main goal."

Zach Goring, who coached Tyus and Tre at Apple Valley High, says the younger Jones always embraced the shadow Tyus left behind. "He's never run from it," Goring says. "Their relationship is so close, there's not any jealousy factor, they're always pulling for each other. If Tre didn't want to follow in Tyus's footsteps, he wouldn't have gone to Duke."

Tre wants to make it clear his older brother actually followed him to Duke, a notion that Tyus doesn't dispute. The Blue Devils were Tre's favorite team before Tyus was even being recruited.

"Tre has loved Duke since he was a little kid," says Tyus, who is now with the Minnesota Timberwolves. "He was on me about why didn't I commit earlier and why was I waiting for so long. This is home for him and for me, and I'm just very excited for his future."

Tyus has no interest in seeing his brother match the standard he established in his only season with the Blue Devils. He wants Tre to surpass it. They don't have the kind of sibling rivalry that's competitive to the point of eating dinner without talking and getting into fisticuffs from hard fouls. Tyus feels responsible for making Tre better in the same way that their eldest brother, Jadee, helped cultivate Tyus's talents.

Jadee is 10 years older than Tyus. He played at Furman as a freshman and was on the 2006 all-Southern Conference rookie team before transferring to Division II Minnesota State-Mankato to be closer to home. Jadee earned his degree in health and exercise science and used Tyus as one of his first subjects to tailor a basketball-specific training regimen. He eventually opened Top Flight Basketball Academy, where he still puts Tyus through workouts and now Tre is old enough to participate.

"Both have been extremely big influences on my game," Tre says. "I would probably say Tyus (has been more) just because we're closer in age. I was able to watch him much more."

Just as important, Tyus has been able to watch Tre. It wasn't uncommon to see Tyus as a high school senior huddled with his younger brother before and after games during the lone year they were on the same team at Apple Valley. Tyus gave pointers or offer critiques in such a way that Tre not only welcomed the feedback, he sought it out.

During the 2015 NBA draft, Tyus hosted a party roughly a block away from the Target Center in downtown Minneapolis. When word trickled through the 508 Bar & Restaurant that the Timberwolves had worked out a trade to select Tyus, the cheers drowned out commissioner Adam Silver as he announced Tyus's name. As Skyler Grey sang the hook "I'm coming home" over the loud speakers, the fact that Tyus would be nearby meant he'd never have to pick up the phone to mentor Tre. When his schedule allowed for it, Tyus would be back in the same Apple Valley gym in which he starred to watch his brother play.

Tyus Jones was the 2015 Final Four Most Outstanding Player for a Duke team that beat Wisconsin for the national title. (Photo by Brian Spurlock-USA TODAY Sports)

"Tyus is very quiet when watching Tre, and he waits until the game's finished or sometime shortly after when he's able to go through situations and scenarios," Goring says. "They both have such high basketball IQs, and they understand each other."

Krzyzewski calls them "cerebral" players. He says he wanted to recruit Tre after watching him in the eighth grade.

"Tre is way ahead because being able to work with Tyus and Tyus being in Minnesota," Krzyzewski says. "Tre is just really smart. A really smart basketball player."

That attribute should come in handy for Tre as he gets acclimated to college ball. Duke won't lack for scoring options, as freshmen R.J. Barrett, Cam Reddish and Zion Williamson are considered the top three players in the Class of 2018. Reddish says Tre is already the leader of their group; he was the first of the four to commit and then took an active role in trying to persuade the others to follow his lead. (The Blue Devils recently added Joey Baker, a five-star forward who announced last month he would reclassify from 2019.) Credit that to Tyus as well. Tre saw how his older brother influenced Jahiiil Okafor, the No. 1 player in the Class of 2014, after they formed a friendship during summer basketball and discussed attending the same school.

Tre says the freshmen have talked almost daily in their run-up to arriving on campus and says they have a great friendship already. They'll have a chance to solidify that bond in August when the Blue Devils travel to Canada for games in Toronto and Montreal. Duke was supposed to play abroad last summer, but Krzyzewski needed knee replacement surgery and the trip was canceled. Tyus believes that his brother's class may have the ingredients to match what his class did in 2015.

"They have the talent level for sure and I think what separated us and what made us such a good team was our chemistry," Tyus says. "We were really brothers. We loved one another and I see the same chemistry with Tre, Cam, Zion and R.J. already. They have the capability to be as good if not better than our 2015 team."

Tyus still has some big brother in him. Yes, he will continue to encourage Tre and help him develop his game. But the big brother isn't shy about listing his accomplishments, although Tre has bragging rights as far as high school goes, capturing two state titles to Tyus's one.

"He already has it over me that he has more state titles than I do," Tyus says. "But I've got a national championship and I'm in the NBA so I got a couple of things I can hold over his head – for the time being."

Not that he wouldn't gladly cede the stage to his little brother.