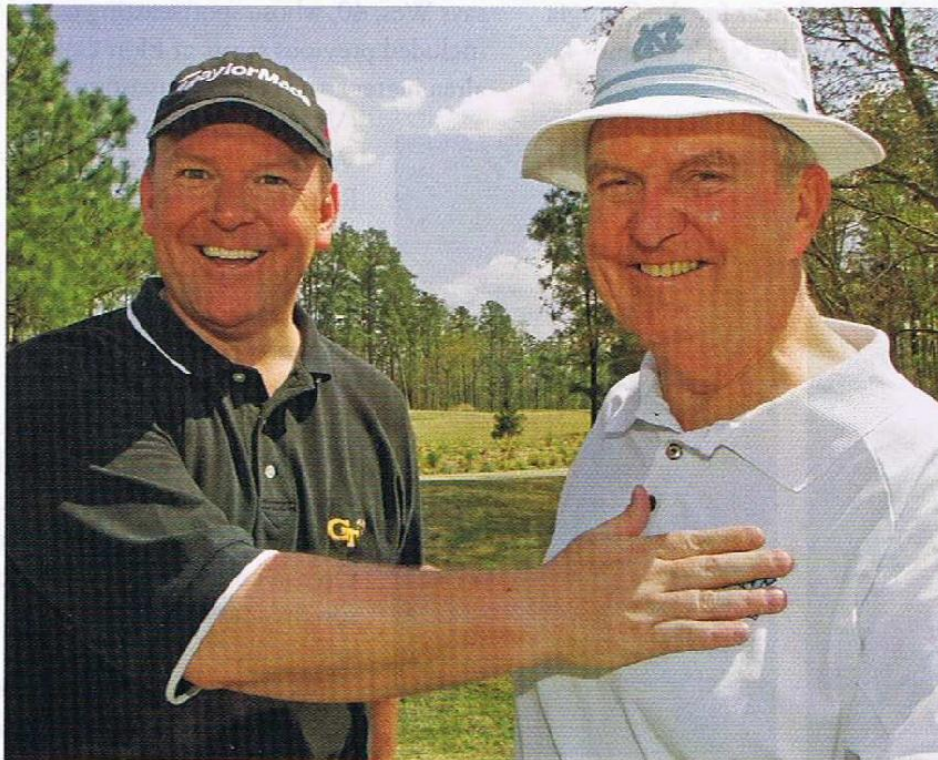


Woody and Wes Durham



FATHER AND SON: WES (LEFT) AND WOODY DURHAM • BY KIM DRELMER

Dueling Frequencies

BY PATRICK JONES

When you first meet Woody and Wes Durham and listen to them exchange words, your sense of hearing heightens. The father and son own nearly identical baritone voices and, blended together, create a music that can best be described as high-fidelity Durham Surround Sound. The experience leaves no question that these two men and their most distinguishable attributes – their voices – share matching chromosomes.

“I nicknamed Wes ‘Left Channel’ because he

sounds like Woody in stereo,” says Gary Hahn, a mutual colleague and the play-by-play announcer for North Carolina State University. “Wes has his own distinctive style of calling a game, but their voice quality – it’s uncanny that they sound so much alike. You could switch them and I wonder how many people would really know.”

Sports fans in the know will no doubt recognize Woody as the legendary voice of the University of North Carolina Tar Heels. The 64-year-old Durham has been a fixture on the

airwaves for more than a half century, having recently completed his 35th season calling Carolina games. Meanwhile, Woody's eldest son, Wes, is forging his own legacy in Georgia as the play-by-play announcer for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets and the NFL's Atlanta Falcons.

His father's influence becomes apparent when the son settles behind the microphone.

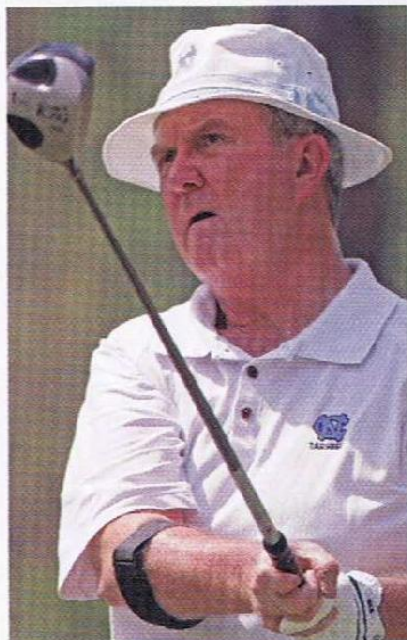
"The differences are that I am a bit more 'new school' with the things I say sometimes," says Wes, 40, whose sportscasting career included previous stints at Elon College (his alma mater) as a graduate assistant, Radford (Va.) College, Marshall and Vanderbilt prior to teaming with the Rambling Wreck in 1995. He added the Falcons to his portfolio in 2004. "Dad is more traditional. But in terms of similar deliveries, it's a heck of a compliment to be compared with him."

Though they're most comfortable calling basketball and football games, the Durhams share another harmonious link: a passion for golf. On the course, however, father and son diverge noticeably in approaches.

Woody's play is best described as steady and down the middle, much like his long-time dedication to everything that is Carolina blue. Wes, on the other hand, is a bomber off the tee who often needs wider avenues for delivery. In golf, as in broadcasting, Wes has learned to adapt and mold himself into a talented scrambler with a knack for finding the cup.

Wes' love of golf began early in life. His father introduced him to the game, and Wes, along with his younger brother Taylor, spent countless hours on the links at MacGregor Downs Country Club in Cary, North Carolina. Woody was a constant companion during those formative years.

Today, the father-and-sons' golfing bond remains strong, and they still carve time into their professional schedules (Taylor also works in the entertainment business as a network affiliate manager with ISP Sports in Winston-Salem) for getaways whenever possible. Last year, for example, the three Durhams and a family friend ventured to Ireland to play Ballybunion, Old Head, Kilarney and other courses in the cradle of golf.



WOODY DURHAM

Handicap: 13

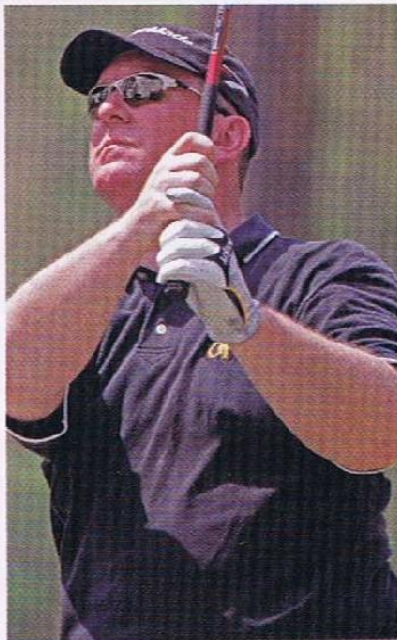
Low score: 71 at Dolphin Head GC, Hilton Head

Holes in one: None

Home course: Chapel Hill CC

Favorite N.C. courses: Pinehurst No. 2, Old North State Club, Grandfather CC

Most memorable foursomes: Included Dean Smith and Roy Williams at Cypress Point; Chi Chi Rodriguez and comedian Foster Brooks at the Greater Greensboro Open pro-am



WES DURHAM

Handicap: 10

Low score: 75 (three times, including Tot Hill Farm in Asheboro, N.C.)

Holes in one: One

Home club: Indian Hills (Marietta, Ga.)

Favorite Ga. courses: East Lake CC, GC of Georgia (Lakeside), Ocean Forest

Most memorable foursome: Georgia Tech football coach Chan Gailey, Tony Barnhart (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution* writer), Stan Cotten (voice of Wake Forest University)

Despite the genetic link and striking likenesses in their voices, Wes' delivery can be attributed as much to nurture as to nature. He was raised listening to Woody describe the action from Kenan Stadium, Reynolds Coliseum and other points along the ACC's once closer-knit Tobacco Road destinations.

Providing golf commentary is not a normal task in their professional repertoires, but Woody and Wes easily slip into their ingrained play-by-play personas while on the course. Woody was in top form during a recent outing at Finley Golf Course in Chapel Hill. The elder Durham found himself and his partner trailing Wes' team after nine holes in a friendly foursome. Woody quickly seized the drama of the moment, a gift that has served him well in calling three Tar Heels NCAA men's basketball championships.

"When stories of the great comebacks are written, this will be Chapter One," Woody declares as he steps to the No. 10 tee. When his partner rolls in a tide-turning putt on No. 12, Woody offers another gem: "Suddenly, when he was needed, he rises to the occasion." No doubt, Durham could just as easily have been describing Michael Jordan hitting a game-winning shot for Dean Smith.

Although Woody and Wes represent competing ACC schools, the inter-family rivalry falls to others in the Durham fold. First on that list would be Jean, Woody's wife and Wes' mother.

"She certainly pulls for Carolina against Tech," Woody says, "but she wants it to be a close game. And she wants us both to do well with our respective parts of the broadcast."

When the Yellow Jackets play any other team, however, Woody concedes that Jean is "Georgia Tech all the way. She learned a long time ago that if your team wins, it sure makes the announcer sound much better."

The rivalry doesn't end with Jean, however. Will and Emily – Wes' 7-year-old twin son and daughter and Woody's only grandchildren – have separate loyalties. Georgia Tech is Will's favorite team. North Carolina runs second.

Wes admits that his dad "sometimes sneaks on me a little bit" by trying to reverse Will's allegiances. For instance, Will attended Roy Williams' Carolina basketball clinic this past Christmas while staying with his grandparents. "Mom and Dad also gave Will all this Carolina stuff," Wes says. Wes, in turn, prompted Georgia Tech basketball coach Paul

Hewitt to call Will on the phone to "make sure Georgia Tech was still his No. 1 team."

While a friendly competitiveness seeps into their golf games and family lives, it's non-existent when Woody and Wes assume their respective broadcast roles. As journalists, their primary responsibility is to remain objective. This detachment does not apply, however, when prompted to discuss each other. The pride and respect between father and son are palpable.

"I've always admired the effort, dedication and loyalty that he has," Wes says of his father. "And that's not just professionally, but personally too. I mean, his friends are his friends. That has been a great inspiration."

According to Wes, the same steadfast commitment extends to UNC. "I think most Carolina fans will agree with my statement that my dad has never taken for granted the role he has played in representing the university – either calling the games, doing alumni events or whatever he has been asked to do. He has never wavered in that loyalty.

"And his calls of great games are second to none," Wes adds. "He's my father and I love him to death, of course. But, regardless of that, he is damned good."

Woody, the consummate father and professional, speaks equally respectful volumes about his son. "I'm very proud of what he has done with his career. When he got to the right spot and with the right people (Atlanta and Georgia Tech), his career really took off."

For proof, Woody points to the fact that when he used to visit Atlanta, he was Woody Durham, voice of the Tar Heels. "Now I go to Atlanta and I am Woody, Wes' dad."

Moreover, Woody surmises that Wes is "genuinely liked" in Atlanta, something he sees from the people with whom he works as well as the other local media. "He has handled it very well," Woody adds. "When we are in Atlanta and out some place, fans come up and speak with him like they know him."

The fans, of course, would be talking with "Left Channel." Meanwhile, Woody, the original source, listens to his living legacy at a frequency only he can truly hear. ♦