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Coleman, Terps oust Devils

By Dan Friedell

Special to the News & Record

GREENSBORO -- Maryland freshman Marissa Coleman is legit.

She proved it in high school, she proved it in the ACC regular season. On Saturday, she proved it in the ACC tournament semifinals.

Coleman, the ACC's top freshman, shook off a rocky game Friday against 11th-seeded Georgia Tech -- during which she got an earful from coach Brenda Frese -- to notch a double-double Saturday and lead the third-seeded Terrapins to a 78-70 win over No. 2 Duke.

Coleman scored the Terrapins' first basket of the game and completed the first half with nine points as Maryland finished the opening 20 minutes ahead 38-32.

But that was just an appetizer. The main course came when Coleman exploded for seven points during a 1:35 stretch early in the second half.

A smooth 3-pointer, a floating 15-footer, a baseline drive and laser of a pass to a wide-open Crystal Langhorne gave Maryland a 51-38 lead with 15:10 to play and had Duke coach Gail Goestenkors desperately signaling for a 30-second timeout.

Earlier Saturday, Coleman and forward Laura Harper decided they had to atone for Friday's subpar efforts.

"We both didn't have our best games yesterday," Coleman said. "We had to bring it today because our team was going to need us more for this game."

Harper -- the Terrapins' most vocal cheerleader on the court -- led Maryland with 17 points and Coleman grabbed 13 rebounds to go with her 16 points.

Coming out of Goestenkors' timeout, Jade Perry made a shot inside to give the Terrapins a 53-38 advantage, their largest lead of the game.

But Maryland would not score for the next four minutes. The Blue Devils, who had been a step slow

on defense most of the game, came to life and went on a 16-0 run to take their first lead of the game with 9:35 to play.

The burst was keyed by both Duke's switch to a 1-3-1 zone and a renewed effort on defense. Goestenkors said her smaller lineup of Monique Currie, Wanisha Smith, Abby Waner, Lindsey Harding and Mistie Williams picked up their intensity on both sides of the court.

But the one-point lead was short-lived. Langhorne made a layup to give Maryland a 55-54 lead with 8:42 left -- and the Terrapins never trailed again.

"We took two real quick shots in a row, and on both occasions they came down and scored," Goestenkors said. "They took the wind out of our sails a little bit."

Maryland held Duke scoreless for almost four minutes and pushed the lead to 62-54.

When freshman guard Kristi Toliver hit a jumper with 2:03 left, it gave the Terrapins a 69-58 lead. From that point on, Maryland converted 9-of-14 free throws to ice the game.

Afterward, Coleman said she appreciated Frese's verbal spanking 18 hours earlier.

"It was just a lot of screaming," she said. "She knows that's what gets me motivated and gets me to do what she wants. She knows that's not going to (negatively) affect me."

The Terrapins will face the Tar Heels today at 1 p.m. for the conference title.

Maryland (28-3)

Duke (26-3)

Blocked shots: Maryland 8 (Harper 2, Coleman 2, Langhorne, Carr, Noirez, Doron); Duke 4 (Williams 2, Bales 2). Steals: Maryland 4 (Langhorne 2, Coleman, Perry); Duke 11 (Currie 3, Harding 3, Waner 2, Williams, Bales, Black). Officials: Mattingly, Dean, Blauch. Attendance: 10,019

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