

# Cole Anthony, monster NYC prospect, takes next step at North Carolina

By [Zach Braziller](#)

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Cole Anthony Getty Images for Powerade

For years, Cole Anthony was billed as The One. The latest, after a hiatus, in a long list of elite New York City point guards. He had the pedigree and the support system in place. He had the inner drive and needed athletic gifts.

Tuesday morning, he took a major step toward reaching the incredibly high expectations that have been set for him, announcing his commitment to North Carolina and coach Roy Williams, joining a select club of local stars who were good enough to land a scholarship to wear the powder blue of the powerhouse ACC school.

“I always wanted to play on the highest level,” the 6-foot-3 Anthony, the son of former Knicks guard and NBA broadcaster Greg Anthony, told The Post. “They have a winning culture, and I want to be a part of it.”

“It’s a validation of all of his work he’s been putting in,” said his mother, Crystal McCrary-McGuire. “It’s the next step in his journey.”

Anthony, a consensus top-three prospect in the country, picked the Tar Heels over Notre Dame, Georgetown and Oregon. He praised the recruiting efforts of all the schools that doggedly chased him, and in particular raved about the relationships he built with Oregon assistant coach Mike Mennenga, Notre Dame’s Mike Brey and Georgetown’s Patrick Ewing, his father’s former Knicks teammate and a close family friend. Ultimately, though, North Carolina’s winning tradition, style of play and the bond he built with Williams won out. Anthony wanted to play for a coach who would push him to excel, but also whom he felt comfortable with, and Williams possessed both of those characteristics.

“I just think he’s a really genuine guy,” said Anthony, from the Upper West Side. “He cares about all of his players. He’s more than a terrific coach. He’s a great person.”

Anthony will arrive at North Carolina as one of the most decorated New York City point guards in years, the MVP of the McDonald’s All-American Game and Jordan Brand Classic who averaged a triple-double at national prep powerhouse Oak Hill Academy (Va.). He won a gold medal with Team USA’s U-18 team in the FIBA Americas, was part of the all-tournament team and was the regular-season MVP of the AAU Nike Elite Youth Basketball League. As a sophomore, he led Catholic school Archbishop Molloy in Queens to its first title game appearance in 17 years, and as a senior starred for Oak Hill against a national schedule featuring the country’s best prospects.

“He’s maybe the most complete guard I ever recruited at this stage of his career, and I think he can get better,” Williams said in a phone interview. “That’s the fun part.”

Williams first saw Anthony the summer after his freshman year, and North Carolina began making a big push last spring. Every time Williams watched him, Anthony improved something new in his game, making a previous weakness a strength. Williams sees attributes of some of his best lead guards in Anthony: Marcus Paige’s clutch gene, Ty Lawson’s speed with the ball and Kendall Marshall’s savvy.



“He’s got a great mixture right now,” Williams said. “And the two qualities I like more than anything are his brains and his heart.”

He’s a unique talent, the best lead guard the city has produced in quite some time, at least since Hornets All-Star guard Kemba Walker. Oak Hill coach Steve Smith has coached nine point guards who have played in the NBA and considers Anthony a talent comparable to the likes of Rajon Rondo, Brandon Jennings and Lawson at the same age. Most impressive to Smith, though, are Anthony’s work habits. When he gave the team off on Saturdays, Anthony would be playing pick-up games with regular students. His family basically has to tie him to the couch to make him take a day off. He frequently spends his free time honing his skills with NBA trainer Chris Brickley.



“He doesn’t just want to be a pro, he wants to be a great pro,” Smith said. “He doesn’t think he’s a finished product, which is a good thing. I’ve seen guys with his ability never reach the level you think they’re going to reach because they didn’t work enough. He’s the dead opposite of that.”

“I’ve never had a point guard rebound like he does, I’ll tell you that,” Smith added.

For years, Anthony has had a bull’s-eye on his back. The famous last name and the lofty ranking haven’t always been easy to live up to. He’s dealt with criticism and social media backlash. But he’s done his best to avoid the pitfalls that have trapped so many New York City phenoms. Unlike so many of his predecessors who were labeled “can’t miss” prospects at a young age, he’s only getting better. Anthony hasn’t plateaued or regressed. His commitment to

North Carolina is just the latest example.

“I really don’t look into the hype,” he said. “I put in so much work, I don’t feel it at this point. I’ve had pressure on my back for a while. At this point, it’s another part of the game I have to deal with.”

It will only increase from here. The one-and-done hype is attached to him. Fans expect Final Fours at North Carolina. He will be closely compared to Coby White, the North Carolina star freshman guard who is headed to the NBA as a likely top-10 draft pick. Then again, nobody expects more from Cole Anthony than himself.

“As a freshman,” he said, “my No. 1 goal is to get to the Final Four.”

— *Additional reporting by Joseph Staszewski*

