

Pirates' Chest

Winter 2008

FANTASTIC FINALE

Chris Johnson Outruns
Boise State in Hawai'i

Also...

- PTM: Les Strayhorn
- BTC: Group Raises Bail
- Lady Pirates Update

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A Letter from Mark Wharton

January 2008



Dear Pirate Club Member,

I hope everyone had a great holiday and enjoyed watching the Pirates in Hawaii. What a great experience and reward for the young men. We all can be proud of our total Athletics Program over the past three years. One thing that has been a constant is the support our loyal Pirate Club members have shown for the past forty-five years. Every year is important but coming off a year like 2007 where the Pirate club saw a 27% increase in members and a 24% increase in dollars. In 2008, it is vital that we do not lose the momentum. In 2008, the Pirate Club is challenged to raise \$5.1 million in scholarship support and reach 13,500 members. We will continue to raise the bar until we can fully fund all our scholarships and provide resources to ensure that our student-athletes have what they need to graduate. Please help us reach our goals and recruit one new Pirate Club member.

Pirate Baseball and Softball season are close to beginning their respective seasons. Come out to watch championship caliber baseball and softball. Pirate Basketball is in full swing! Come out to support your Pirates! 2008 is looking like a great year!

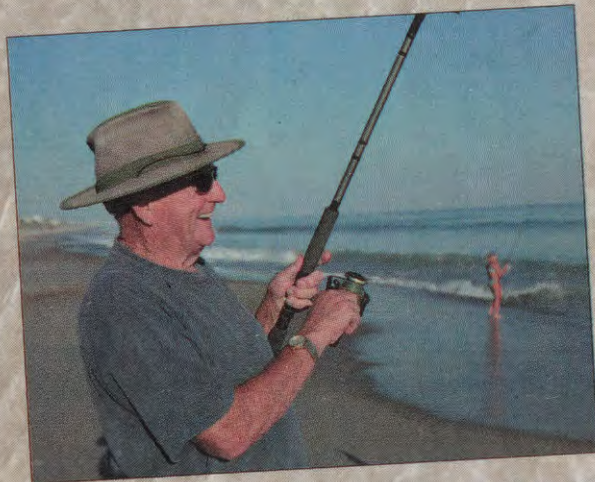
In a few weeks you will be receiving information about your 2008 renewal in the mail. This year, the message for the Pirate Club will be "The Call". We must continue on our course and navigate the Pirate Ship forward to our charter destination. We have come so far but have far to go. We ask you, once again, to make your pledge by May 1, 2008 and pay 50% to receive the same parking and seating benefits for football and basketball. Thank you again for all that the Pirate Nation has done for East Carolina University and the Pirate Club for 2007! I look forward to seeing you in the arena and in the stands this spring! GO PIRATES!



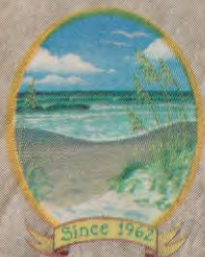
Sincerely,

Mark T. Wharton
Executive Director

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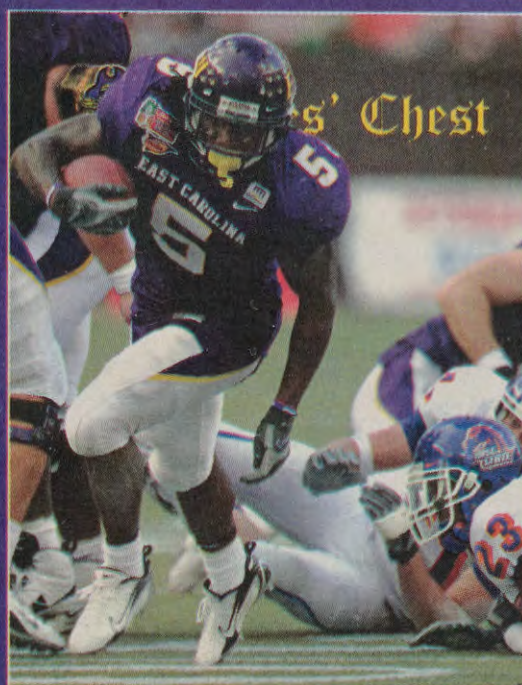
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(Cover: AP Photo/Marco Garcia)

FANTASTIC FINISH

East Carolina's visit to Waikiki Beach proved more than a luxurious vacation. The Pirates were prepared for business in Honolulu and tamed the powerful Broncos for 41-38 Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl victory. Once again it was running back Chris Johnson leading the way, and *The Pirates' Chest* pays its tribute to CJ and the Pirates. Also in this issue, Ron Cherubini is back for another journey in the Pirate Time Machine. Hop aboard with Ron as he takes a trek with former ECU standout Les Strayhorn. With basketball in full swing, Al Myatt and Bethany Bradsher take another look at ECU's victories over N.C. State in men's and women's hoops.

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As always, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the East Carolina University Media Relations Office, in particular, media relations director Tom McClellan. The lightning speed with which Mr. McClellan and his entire staff always work in response to our numerous requests for specific images makes working with ECU Media Relations a true pleasure in producing this publication. Thank you.



From the Crow's Nest

ALOHA MEANS VICTORY FOR JOHNSON, PIRATES

By Denny O'Brien, Editor

Perhaps Chris Johnson's performance in the Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl was fitting given the setting. His 408 all-purpose yards (223 rushing, 36 receiving, 153 on kickoff returns) shattered the NCAA bowl record, which surpassed the efforts of many of the all-time greats who have displayed their talents at Aloha Stadium.

Those names include a who's who list of legendary running backs, each of whom showcased their talents in the NFL Pro Bowl. Names like Walter Payton, Barry Sanders, Emmitt Smith, and Marshall Faulk have all been starring attractions in Honolulu, but none soared quite like Johnson on December 23.

Against 24th-ranked Boise State, the national sweethearts from last year, Johnson was a one-man wrecking crew. Though it was Broncos running back Ian Johnson who boasted all of the media attention entering the game, it was Chris Johnson who left an indelible impression in ECU's 41-38 victory.

"What the rest of country saw is what we've been watching for three years," Pirates coach Skip Holtz said following the game. "I'm the president of the Chris Johnson fan club. I am his biggest fan. He is one of the hardest workers on this team. He's humble. He works his tail off."

It certainly paid off. After years of struggling to find his niche within the ECU offense, Johnson finally solidified himself as the Pirates' feature running back. He finished with 1,423 yards rushing, 528 receiving, while averaging 28 yards per kick return and scoring 24 touchdowns.

Those numbers are largely why East Carolina took another step forward this season with an eight-win campaign.

"It feels good to end my career like this," Johnson said after the win. "I wanted to come out here and show the country that I am the best back in the country."

While Johnson no doubt was the catalyst behind the Pirates' resurgence to championship football, his supporting cast was hardly a slouch. The emergence of both Rob Kass and Patrick Pinkney at quarterback gave ECU plenty of options, and their pro-

tection of the football was no less responsible for several wins.

Against Boise State, it was largely Pinkney's show, as offensive coordinator Todd Fitch unveiled an offensive game plan that centered on ECU's ground game out of the spread. Pinkney finished with 53 yards rushing and 118 passing in the bowl victory.

But it was Kass who closed the deal with his drop-back passing ability. With the game tied, the strong-armed gunslinger fired a 36-yard strike to go-to receiver Jamar Bryant to set up the game-winning field goal by Ben Hartman.

It was a gut-wrenching conclusion to a nail-biter season for ECU, one that included three games decided by last-second field goals. It also was an inspirational ending to a once-in-a-lifetime experience for ECU's players, most of whom visited Oahu for the first time in their lives.

"It has the potential to be a trip of a lifetime for the players, experiencing the culture, the North Shore, Pearl Harbor, the luaus, beaches and just the scenic beauty that is over there," Holtz said just days

before ECU traveled to Hawaii. "It is a great reward for our guys after a long, hard and emotional season in which we played for so many weeks in a row."

No reward was more beneficial to the Pirates than the game itself. For Johnson, it provided a major boost in his NFL stock, which is soaring after his ambush of Boise State. For ECU, it marked the eighth of the season, and an 8-5 record provides a significant boost in perception after finishing 7-6 in 2006.

Ditto for the opponent the Pirates beat. Boise State is widely considered the king of non-BCS schools, and East Carolina dominated the Broncos for much of the game.

It was a scenario that few envisioned for ECU when it accepted the invitation to play in Hawai'i. But it's one that should carry with it tremendous momentum on the recruiting trail, during spring practice, and into next fall.





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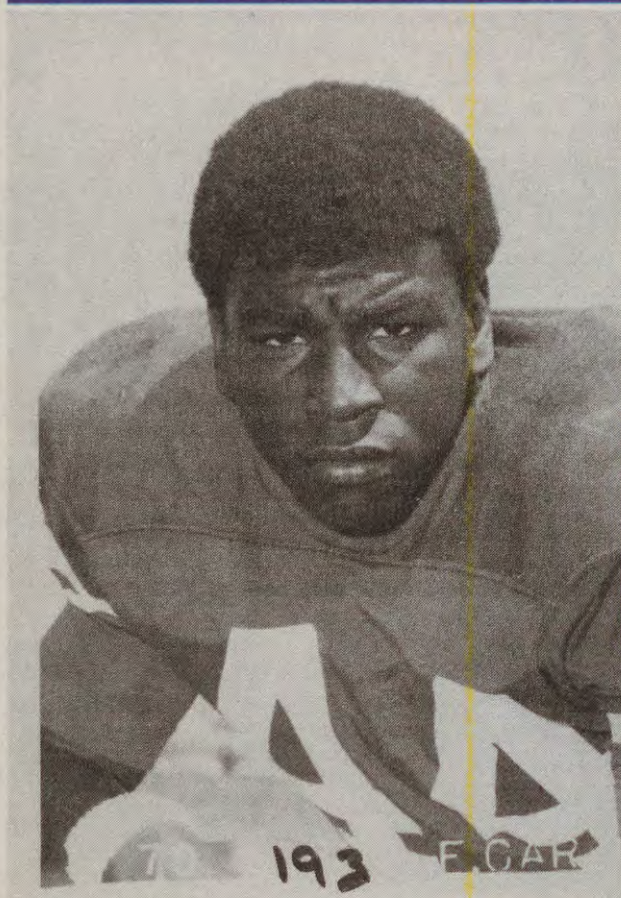
Pirates in HAWAII



PIRATE TIME MACHINE

LES STRAYHORN SHINING BRIGHT:

**STAR ON THE FIELD IS RAY OF
HOPE FOR MANY IN NEED**



(ECU Media Relations)

RANDLE-ERA BACK WORKING TO OFFER HELP
WHERE MANY HAVE TURNED A BLIND EYE

By Ron Cherubini

At 16, growing up in the small town of Trenton, N.C., there were only two things that really mattered to a young Les Strayhorn: football and people. Perhaps more tuned in to things than many of his peers, Strayhorn, a force in Sonny Randle's backfield for the 1970's-era Pirates, was keenly aware of the world around him. It was the 1960's and the civil rights movement was under way. Even in a small, tucked-away tobacco crossroads, awareness of social inequity and inequality was not lost on him. He knew then that his life would ultimately be dedicated to the social well-being of others.

"I remember when I was 16, driving people to the polls to vote and delivering food to people and giving others rides to the grocery store as apart of church outreach," Strayhorn said. "Remember, this was during the 1960's when, you know, helping people out was a true movement and it just felt right."

Strayhorn — who lives in Chapel Hill — has spent the last 10 years doing case work with HIV/AIDS patients in North Carolina to ensure that they get what they need physically, mentally, and emotionally to live with the disease and lead productive, normal lives. It is a calling that he knew would be the only work

that would satisfy him.

"I decided to go into social work because I wanted to be involved with large issues that affect all of us," he said. "Very few people want do the dirty work and try to resolve the issues, and that is kind of what drove me to this profession, particularly the world of HIV/AIDS. One of the things I always felt social work was about is tackling issues that are uncomfortable to everyone but need to be addressed."

In some ways, it was this calling that led him to East Carolina University for football.

"I knew all along that I wanted to be in social work and my counselor in high school made me aware that East Carolina had one of the best schools for it in the state at that time," Strayhorn recalled. "And Leo Jenkins was the president (of the college) then. He was such a strong guy who wanted to bring the medical school there and had a vision of growth at the school and at the time they were converting from ECTC to East Carolina College and I thought it would be a good place for me to grow. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to get a degree, major in social work, and make some contacts — the kind you know for the rest of your life."

Though he had his calling from a young age, it was football that was the vehicle to carry him from Jones Central High

School to East Carolina to the Dallas Cowboys and the Montreal Alouettes (CFL), then back home again to Greenville and his post-football life in the work he does now. Teamwork, putting others ahead of oneself, grit, determination, doing the dirty work... determination to scale the insurmountable mountain... all qualities he honed while battling on the turf at Ficklen.

CHURCH, FOOTBALL, AND TOBACCO

In Trenton during Strayhorn's youth, a boy was generally doing one of three things: going to church, working in the tobacco fields, or playing football. For Strayhorn and his younger brother Kenny, also a star at East Carolina, football was the activity of choice to fill those moments between Sundays at church and the late summer harvest.

"It was sports or nothing in my home town," Strayhorn fondly recalled. "Our town had about 400 people and sports... well...that was pretty much it. You worked, you went to church and you played sports. That was country living in the '60's and '70's. In the '60's particularly, with the civil rights movement and a lot of unrest in Vietnam, sports were a way of staying out of trouble. My mom thought it would be a good discipline opportunity to learn how to work with others... that sort of thing. She was right about that.

"Kenny and I used to organize football games in our neighborhood. I'd get to play quarterback and running back and we would kind of pick the teams. He would get one team and I would get another and we'd always play against each other. So that way, we started a competitive streak that kind of lasted all the way through college. He played for (Coach Pat) Dye while I started at East Carolina at the end of the Clarence Stasavich era."

Playing football came easy to Strayhorn. He would watch the games on TV and listen to his father, Les Sr., point out the basic do's and don'ts of the game.

"I guess being a running back came mostly from growing up sitting and watching football games with my dad." He said. "His favorite running back was Jim Brown and (Dad) always talked about running backs, running backs, running backs. He was a Cleveland Browns fan... they had good running game and he absolutely loved Lou Groza the kicker."

Though his father was not a ball player himself, he might well have been had he not dropped out of school in eighth grade.

"Later on, he went back to high school and he actually graduated with me in 1969,"

Strayhorn said. "Though he went to night school, we got to walk together. It was a wonderful, great experience that I think made us even closer."

To see his father, humble but determined, overcome what he carried for years as a failure, was a great lesson in humility and gumption and was a motivator for Strayhorn. And, it underscored the strong believe in education that his father and mother (Edna) had and demanded of their six children.

"Education was always in the forefront in our home," Strayhorn said. "In fact I couldn't play athletics unless my grades were good. I played four years worth of football, four years worth of track, and two years worth of basketball, so you get the picture of how I did in school, which made my parents happy."

Jones Central High was not the model of football greatness, but the teams there were generally competitive. There was no lack of decent athletes, just a lack of quantities of decent athletes. But then, it didn't matter to Strayhorn who was just happy he had a venue in which to play the sport he loved.

"We won about as many as we lost but we had pretty good crowds out at our games," he recalled. "The participation by the parents was good, too, which made it a good time for the town. Burgaw and Wallace-Rose Hill were the two big teams at that time (in Class 2-A) and South Lenoir kind of owned our conference, so we didn't go to the playoffs or anything like that.

"I remember that my mom would come to my games but she didn't always watch because she didn't like it when I got hit. She just didn't like that at all," Strayhorn said. "My dad, of course, loved the rough stuff... he liked the rough and tumble of football and he would bring all of his friends along to games so we always had a big Strayhorn section at Jones and later at East Carolina."

As he began to blossom as a running back on the football



Les Strayhorn, center, with his dad signing to play football for East Carolina. At left is coach Clarence Stasavich. Back center is assistant coach Odell Welborn At far right is Bill Cain. (Submitted)

field, his father and other relatives fueled his desire to play beyond high school.

"I had an uncle who talked about football all the time," Strayhorn said. "He played for Hampton University in Virginia and he kind of encouraged me to play (in college). That was Uncle Clemmie Strayhorn. He kind of made it clear to me what opportunities football (in college) made available."

Desire and ability was clearly there, but Strayhorn was not sure that he would have an opportunity as Trenton was not exactly on the average college recruiter's itinerary. But his prep coach, Dan Ballard, helped there.

"At the end of my sophomore year, my coach put together a highlight reel and sent it to a few places and colleges started responding," Strayhorn said. "His thinking was teams like Penn State, Army, TCU, Carolina, Wake Forest, N.C. State... none of those teams are going to come to see Jones Central play football. He was right. I started getting a few letters from as far away as Texas, which I thought that was kind of neat. I had a good junior season and interest really went up. By my senior year, about six schools asked me to come visit them and look around."

One of those schools was East Carolina, which oddly enough had taken notice of Strayhorn after he attended the N.C. State High School Class 2-A Track Sectional meet in Greenville, where Strayhorn won the 100 and 220 events.

Though Strayhorn said his best visit was clearly East Carolina, he originally had not intended to accept the scholarship offer. One of the first and most persistent major programs to come calling was Texas Christian and Strayhorn really was sold on them. To East Carolina's benefit, mom wasn't. She wanted her boy to be close enough so that "I could come see you and you can come home if you get homesick."

"I had my heart set on going to TCU, but my mom said that it was too far away," he said. "So, my choices were North Carolina, East Carolina, and Lenoir Rhyne. I liked East Carolina out of all the schools I looked at, too. Honestly... they got me for a steak dinner with my father and a picture which I still have on my wall of my dad and I being recruited by them."

And his father's endorsement also meant a lot to him. By then, he and his father were not just father-and-son, they were

best friends.

"He followed me along my entire career... he has always been there," he said. "When I was out in Dallas, he came to some of the games. When I wound up in the Canadian Football League, he would come up to some of those games. He was very involved in my career all the way through. He always went to the ECU games, of course, and Coach Randle even let him run around on the sidelines my senior year, which he loved."

A TIME OF TRANSITION AT EAST CAROLINA

While East Carolina President Leo Jenkins was reshaping the future of the university at large, it was likewise a rapid changing scene in the athletics department when Strayhorn arrived on campus.

Though recruited by legendary coach Clarence Stasavich, Strayhorn arrived on campus to a program in the midst of

what would retrospectively would be monumental change. Stasavich was en route to hanging up his whistle and would devote fulltime to his athletic director duties after 1969, the season during which Strayhorn made a name for himself on the frosh team. As Strayhorn was prepping up for his sophomore season, his first on the varsity, Stas would appoint then-St. Louis Cardinals assistant and former



Strayhorn on the sideline at an ECU Football Game with "Squealy" McNealy. (Submitted)

former Duke Outland Trophy winner Mike McGee to be the next Pirate skipper.

Strayhorn would play just one season for McGee as the coach bolted ECU – following a 3-8 season – for his alma mater. So by the end of his sophomore season, Strayhorn had experienced – in one form or another – three head football coaches in his college career. Stability followed in the form of Sonny Randle and with it a huge collegiate career unfolded for Strayhorn.

"When I was a freshman, we were not allowed to play with the varsity," Strayhorn pointed out. "That rule changed a few years later, but (freshman coach) Bill Cain was as close as we got to Stasavich. Cain ran the Single Wing so I learned how to run it as a freshman. I was a fullback. My sophomore year was a shock to the system because Coach McGee was a big disciplinarian who changed the whole program... he was starting from scratch. We didn't have a very good year my sophomore year, but my junior

LES STRAYHORN'S EAST CAROLINA CAREER STATS

YEAR	TEAM	RUSHING				RECEIVING				PUNT RETURNS				KICKOFF RETURNS			
		Att	Yds	Avg	TDs	Rec	Yds	Avg	TDs	Ret	Yds	Avg	TDs	Ret	Yds	Avg	TDs
1970	ECU	120	588	4.9	2	2	30	15.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	6	97	16.2	0
1971	ECU	113	453	4.0	4	4	22	5.5	0	0	0	0.0	0	4	83	20.8	0
1972	ECU	140	632	4.5	2	5	80	16.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	6	71	11.8	0
Totals		373	1,673	4.5	8	11	132	12.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	16	251	15.7	0

year, when Coach Randle got there, we went 9-2 and 9-2 and won two Southern Conference championships. So we got the ball rolling."

To Strayhorn, college football wasn't all that difficult, he recalled.

"College football... I wouldn't say it was easy because that would minimize the amount of work that actually went into it for me, but I grew up on a tobacco farm so getting up early and working hard wasn't a problem for me," he explained. "My dad used to get me up at 5 a.m. to go to work. The weight room wasn't that tough because I was used to throwing 100-pound fertilizer sacks. That was what Jones County was like back then... farmland. The peanuts, tobacco, soy beans and corn and that is all hard work. I was used to that so going to school really was kind of a break. I was determined that I wasn't going back to the farm. I will never do any farm work again if I can help it."

Strayhorn quickly assimilated himself into the school community, which he says from all indicators is much the same today.

"Then, the community was made up of the kind of people who will look out for you... who will pull together and talk to you about what is going on around town and give you a nudge if you are getting off track," he said. "It was a big family type atmosphere."

And as a football player, he enjoyed what free time he had among his contemporaries.

"A group of us used to go down to the Student Union and just kind of sit on the wall and watch people go by... it was recreation for us at the time," he said. "Most of the coaches kept us busy with study hall and practice. If we weren't doing football-related practice, then we were doing skills development work like catching passes, carrying the ball around, or studying playbook. I also ran track for Coach Bill Carson, so after football season, I ran indoor and outdoor track. I was an athlete for ECU for the entire year so I really savored those moments sitting on the wall."

Strayhorn said that as a student at East Carolina at that time, it was awfully hard not to be inspired by what Jenkins was doing and his fiery, us-against-the-world approach. He admits it

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1974 Graduate of East Carolina University & Pirate Club Member



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helped him think much bigger than himself.

"Leo was quite an inspirational guy," he said. "Leo was a character. I love Leo Jenkins... he was a funny man. But when it came to East Carolina, he was all business. He was all East Carolina, all the time."

And it was lessons learned from Leo Jenkins that prompted Strayhorn to leave a student life mark on East Carolina.

"When I was a sophomore, Leo told me this: 'The best thing you can learn to do, is to learn how to bring all the people under the tent and talk. I am a big tent guy and you need to be a big tent guy, too.'"

"I took that to heart and have carried that forward in my life."

What that meant in 1973 to Strayhorn was to find a way to help his community and he did so by helping to bring together a small group – nine to be exact – of like-minded individuals to found the Omega Psi Phi chapter at East Carolina.

"It is true... I was one of the founding members of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity chapter on campus," he said. "I was not really an organizer but what actually happened is that my Uncle Charles, who I love dearly, who lived in D.C., went to North Carolina Central and was an Omega Psi Phi fraternity man so he highly encouraged me to get involved in the Omegas organization, but East Carolina didn't have one. So, he kind of suggested that we start one at ECU and that was the impetus for us to get involved at ECU."

He and brothers Eddie Dungee, Willie Harvey, Mike Jones, Gary Phillips, Tim Jones, Marshall McAden, Maurice Huntley, and Connie Toppings, with the help of East Carolina advisers, formed the Charter Line for the Omegas at East Carolina. Their agenda was community service heavy, running the gamut of social issues like voter education, homelessness, illiteracy, and equal educational opportunities, to fundraising for organizations like the United Way and NAACP, to health issues like Sickle Cell Anemia, Diabetes, and of course HIV/AIDS – all of which the Omegas to this day continue.

It is something he doesn't dwell on much, but clearly

is proud of his involvement in bringing the organization to his school. That knack for social involvement and for helping bring others under the tent at times of crisis and need was also tested on the football field at East Carolina.

"I will tell you what happened – because we had a losing

season under Coach McGee – when Sonny Randle came in, he started something he called 'The Circus,'" Strayhorn said. "The Circus was a practice after practice and what happened is that it was a lot of running... a lot of conditioning trying to get ready for a tough year. And it was tough... not just hard work. Well, a lot of people started leaving in the middle of the night. Seriously, they were packing up and leaving because of how physically tough it was. So, the mystery was, 'How many of us are going to be left when this ends?'"

"So at the end of pre-season practice, the guys who were still standing... we all kind of looked at each other and said, 'We are going to stick together,' and that kind of became the core of our team. To this day, our captains – Jimmy Creech and Jim Post – are still our captains. They call and organize things and keep us all connected. I never considered quitting during that. I wasn't going to quit in the middle of tough work... I grew up with

tough work. A lot of the kids – we were all 18, 19, 20-years old – and it was just too much for them. Sonny would always say, 'If it doesn't kill you, it will make you stronger.' And it did for us."

What followed was Southern Conference dominance as the Pirates posted back-to-back 9-2 seasons, capturing the 1972-73 league titles. Strayhorn was a huge part of that success, piling up 1,452 rushing yards (4.4 yards per carry) and 13 TD's in an offense filled with playmakers.

"My junior year, we were able to recruit this Wilson Fike running back who you may have heard of – Carlester Crumpler – and that was also the same year that they changed the rules so freshman could play, and he got a lot of time that season,"



Strayhorn (40) playing for East Carolina. (Submitted)

Strayhorn said. "He played tailback and I was moved to fullback, which was fine with me because I had seen him play in high school and I knew what kind of running back he could be.

"It was all about offense then... we stayed on the field a lot those two years, but we also had a great defense that created a lot of turnovers and gave the ball back a lot. It was really a combination of aggressive defense and an offense that held on to the ball. We also had a quarterback, Carl Summerell, who was an excellent passer. When Carl came in with Crumpler, we ended up mixing it up more like 50-50 then. We still were a possession team, but we could pass and run."

A true team-first player, Strayhorn points to the two titles and a an 11-game win-streak as the hallmarks of his achievement as a player. And on a personal note, it was his team's success that brought NFL attention his way.

"Personally, the Southern Conference gave me an opportunity to get a shot in the NFL," Strayhorn said.



(L to R) Leo Jenkins, Les Strayhorn, Carlester Crumpler and Sonny Randle (Submitted)
The image is inscribed, "Best wishes to my good friend, Les Strayhorn - Leo W. Jenkins."

LES STRAYHORN Bio Box

NAME: Les Strayhorn
AGE: 56
SPORT(S): Football
YEARS AT ECU: 1970-73
POSITION/ JERSEY NO. Running Back/No. 44 then 40
HOMETOWN: Trenton, NC
CURRENTLY RESIDES: Chapel Hill, NC
OCCUPATION:
• HIV Case Manager – Chatham County (NC) Health Department
• Former NFL player – Dallas Cowboys
ECU DEGREE(S):
• BSW Social Work, East Carolina University
• MSW Social Work, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
MARITAL STATUS: Married
SPOUSE: Maryann
CHILDREN: Jennifer, 25; Regina, 16
QUOTABLE:

"Leo (Jenkins) was quite an inspirational guy. Leo was a character. I love Leo Jenkins...he was a funny man. But when it came to East Carolina, he was all business. He was all East Carolina, all the time."

"My junior year, I started thinking that I might get a chance, when I started getting letters from the pro teams. My first one was the San Diego Chargers. It was one of those, 'We think you are a prospect' letters. I was looking around and noticed that there were not a lot of guys getting these, so I was thinking, 'This is a possibility for me.' And, I had always wanted to play for my favorite team... the Dallas Cowboys. I was holding out hope for an opportunity to play for them and it worked out that way."

The Cowboys sent all-star corner back Cornell Green out to see Strayhorn to sell him on the Cowboys.

"It took me a few minutes to decide I wanted to be with the Cowboys," he said. "Cornell took me to the Steak Barn and he explained what the Cowboys wanted from me and what I needed to do to make the team and that I would be late round pick. There was some concern about my shoulder because I hurt it my junior year, but it held up my senior year and the Cowboys were still interested."

THE PROFESSIONAL WHIRLWIND

"I was real excited about being drafted... I really can't do (the feelings that day) justice," Strayhorn said. "On draft day, after it was all over, a group of us went out on the town and then went down to Myrtle Beach and celebrated more. Then came back and I drove to Texas.

"After you get the call, it is a train ride. You are on your way, you get a physical, you get the playbook and you are off to the pounding. The first thing we did in training camp was to run a timed-mile and in my group there are guys like Drew Pearson,



Strayhorn (40) in his NFL days with the Dallas Cowboys. (Dallas Cowboys)

Billy Joe Dupree, and Robert Newhouse... it hits you quick. Thank God I had a track background. It let me know I could compete with the best guys and they were all high draft choices."

Particularly for Strayhorn, who grew up idolizing the stars on the Cowboys roster, his first days in training camp were overwhelming.

"It took a while to adjust," he said. "My first three days, I was like, 'Look, that's Roger Staubach over there, that is Bob Lilly over there. The roster was filled with a Who's Who of football. There was Calvin Hill, Rayfield Wright, Cliff Hill, Golden Richards, Lee Roy Jordan and Bob Hayes – Bullet Bob Hayes – man they were great players. It was All-Americans every where you looked. Yeah, it took a few days to figure out that you better stop being a fan and be a football player."

"You know when it clicked in for me was after the first couple of pre-season games. The person who came up to me and said, 'You can make this team' was Bob Hayes. He always called everyone 'Young Blood' and he came over to me and said, 'Hey, Young Blood. You know you can make this team if you buckle down and take things a little more seriously. You can make this team because you have the talent.' And I am there thinking, 'I can make this team because Bob Hayes is telling me I can.'"

That was the endorsement he needed to become a pro.

"The light clicked for me at that point," he explained. "I felt like I belonged on the field with everyone there. After the final cuts and you are still remaining, there is no better feeling. When Tom Landry came into the first meeting after final cuts and said, 'There are no bad football players in this room. Now I am going to make you better,' it really sinks in. That was a chill moment when a legend like Landry tells you that you are a good player and he is going to make you better."

That year, his rookie season, the Cowboys advanced to

the NFC Championship game, eventually losing in the last two minutes on a Fran Tarkenton to John Gilliam pass that propelled the Vikings to the Super Bowl where they lost to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"That was as close as I got to a Super Bowl," he said.

The next year, the Cowboys didn't make the playoffs and in his third year, he was released during the season following a Cowboys trade with Pittsburgh that brought Preston Pearson to the Dallas backfield. The Cowboys went on to win the Super Bowl that season.

"I was 22-23 years old then," he recalled. "At the time, Coach Landry asked me a question that I should have said 'yes' to but I didn't. He asked me, 'Could you see yourself just

playing on third downs?' And of course, my whole life I had been trained to think, 'I want to play all the time.' You want to start, so I said, 'No, I want to be a fulltime running back in the NFL.'"

"Of course, what Landry was doing at that time was tooling around with the idea of third down specialty back concept that later went on to become a staple in the NFL. He was the innovator and that was why he brought in Preston Pearson and he implemented it and took them to a Super Bowl. He wanted someone who would specialize in the 10-15 yard down and out. I should have said 'Yes.'"

Landry respected his beliefs but so liked Strayhorn that he stepped up for him.

"Coach Landry called Atlanta and made arrangements for me to do a tryout there so I spent two-and-a-half months in Atlanta," Strayhorn said. "Atlanta kept me on the roster, but I didn't play and I got tired of sitting around and I called Coach Landry back and asked him if it would be possible to ask for an audition for me somewhere else and he used his contacts with the Hamilton Tiger Cats (of the CFL)."

Strayhorn headed to the Great White North where he played for the Tiger Cats for two years before moving to the Montreal Alouettes for another three years.

"Even though I didn't get in the backfield much, my best professional performances were in Dallas. I had good solid games for them my rookie season."

In all, he played seven pro seasons which included a Grey Cup Championship in 1976 when he was with Montreal, where his playing career ended.

"The end... hmmm," Strayhorn thought. "I was sitting in the Montreal Hospital overlooking the Saint Lawrence Seaway in a cast up to my thigh because I had my knee buckle in a game at

Olympic Stadium, and the doctors came in and said, 'You ought to see and hear what they are saying about you on television.'

"They were talking about the end of my career. They were right. I did come back briefly and thought about trying to play with a bad knee, but I let my better judgment take over and that was the end for me."

REBUILDING LIFE FOR THE LONG HAUL

Strayhorn packed up and headed back to Greenville.

"I didn't know I would end up in North Carolina, but I knew that I needed to put the pieces back together and start over and I thought, 'Where I am going to do this?' he said. "So, I decided to come back to Greenville and started all over from there. My first job back in Greenville, I worked for the Pitt County School system as a school Social Worker."

He also met his wife, Maryann, when she moved in next door to him.

"What can I say, I made friends with my neighbor and it was the best thing that ever happened to me."

And she came along at an important time for Strayhorn.

"I didn't really have a plan... it was a progression," he reflected. "Then, the (school counseling) program was cut back

in Greenville, so I went into banking. Remember Jake Dove, the (ECU) defensive end? He was the human resources guy at Wachovia and so I called Jake up and said, 'Jake, do you have anything at Wachovia?' And Jake said, 'Come to work on Monday.' And I went to work on Monday not really sure what I was going to be doing and I wound up in retail at Wachovia. Actually, I was repossessing cars but it gave me an opportunity to learn about banking and I ended up moving into mortgage banking and moved to Maryland and worked for Standard Federal Savings and Loans for about 10 years."

Though he excelled in banking, he felt a pull back to what he had always wanted to do.

"I decided to go back into Social Work so we moved back to North Carolina to Wilmington and my wife went to nursing school. Once she graduated, we moved to her first job in nursing which was in Oxford (NC). We didn't want to stay in Oxford or Granville County, but we wanted to be close (enough for work). The schools were really good (in Chapel Hill) and we had two kids that were school age at the time, so we moved to Chapel Hill and we have been here ever since."

With two health care professionals in the house, it is an exciting time these days as political perspectives are bantered about daily on such topics as universal healthcare and stem cell



Les Strayhorn and his brothers, Darryl (Center) and Kenny (Right) (Submitted)

research. Having collected his Masters degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1999, Strayhorn stays acutely up on the social issues facing the country, so he and Maryann have plenty to talk about at home.

"We don't really talk about work at home all the time, but it does come up now and then," he said with a laugh. "Both being in the field, it is kind of hard to avoid."

As with many ex-career athletes, Strayhorn sort of went into a football hibernation following his playing days and only recently has emerged from it.

"Right after I stopped playing, I didn't follow football at all for the longest time," he said. "Then, the idea of getting away and rebuilding my life – my real life – appealed to me. My wife wasn't then and isn't now a sports person, so it wasn't one of those things where she felt a need to discuss it. So we really just didn't address it for a long time. It was that way until 2000 when (former teammate) Jimmy Creech gave me a call and asked me to come to the Letterman's Weekend events. That gave me a chance to reconnect with guys I had not seen in a very long time. Just about that time, too, the Montreal Alouettes were doing a reunion of the '70's and '80's teams and I took the family to Montreal. Neither my daughters nor my wife really knew much about my football past so it gave them chance to see what that was all about and that was enjoyable... I liked that.

"I think they liked seeing that part of my life, too."

FINALLY ABLE TO BE A FAN

Once his whole life, football is now an enjoyable part of his life again. He has reconnected to his football roots and has been an avid follower of the Pirates over the last few years.

"This year (2007), I like the brand of football ECU has been playing and I have followed it on CSTV which is on cable here," he said. "So I have reconnected with Carlester, Jimmy, Jim, and some of the other fellas more. I am starting to do more in terms of involvement with ECU football, which has been very nice. You know, this year, the Sonny Randle-era players had a reunion and I got a chance to see some of my former teammates and that was very good for me."

Like many others who are coming back into the fold, Strayhorn is in awe of the changes that have occurred at East Carolina since his days donning the Purple & Gold.

"The facilities are wonderful now," he said. "The Murphy Center is truly fantastic. I sat with a bunch of recruits at the State

game and those kids were impressed – you could see in their eyes. I heard several of them saying things like, 'When I get here...' and 'we are going to do this here and that here....'

"Clearly (ECU) has the money and the insight and are doing great things with it there. And as a program they are definitely heading in the right direction in my opinion. Terry Holland and Coach (Skip) Holtz seem to be staying with the tradition of in the football program with players who have the speed and agility of track guys and they are finding those big guys who can run on the defensive line. This has been fun being part of it all again."

And, like other football alums, Strayhorn expressed that he would love to see more done to keep the Pirate football history intact and in the forefront by way of some outward symbols of past greatness and great players. Not surprisingly, he conjured up a Dallas Cowboys tradition: the Ring of Honor.

"ECU has some many good athletes that they could put in a ring of honor there... that would be great!" he said. "I have always been impressed with the diversity of the athletes in the football program and the success East Carolina has had with all the limitations. It would be great to honor some of the best of these athletes in a way that everyone could (touch and feel)."

He keeps busy these days following the Pirates and following the successes in the lives of his two daughters, one a biologist in Raleigh and the other an aspiring performer who is readying for high school graduation.

"My daughter likes drama. I have really enjoyed watching her perform. She does improve comedy... she is very good actress, but I am a little biased," he said. "These days I am looking to see what

choices she and her sister will be making for school and life and I am trying to help out in that. It is going to be more competitive than ever for her generation to get good jobs, I think. My wife and I talk a lot about how much longer we are going to work and whether or not to relocate. I think where my daughters are will help shape that decision."

Strayhorn lives life a lot like he played football for the Pirates.

"You know, at the Randle-era reunion, it was wonderful to see how well a lot of the guys are doing," he said. "But what really hit home for me was when they listed all of our former teammates who have died. Sonny used to always say, 'Boys, savor the moment, then go about your business.' I am trying to savor the moments."



Strayhorn with daughters Jennifer (L) and Regina (R). (Dallas Cowboys)

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Beyond the Call

GROUP COMMITMENT RAISES BAR

GIBBS • HARRIS • JUDSON • WAUGH

By Al Myatt

Motivations to endow scholarships can take different forms as is indicated through the recent commitments of Rob Harris, Rick Judson, Phil and Jean Waugh, and Phil Gibbs.

Harris made an endowment in support of the football program in memory of Gary Alford, a valued friend from his days as an ECU student. Judson wanted to avoid significant capital gains taxes on a condominium and found an opportunity to simultaneously boost his alma mater on the gridiron.

The Waughs had helped ECU in other areas and were ready to step up in support of the football program after Phil Waugh spent some time with Pirates coach Skip Holtz in the off-season. Gibbs' 10-year old daughter, Jo Anna, has developed an interest in the women's basketball team at ECU, which led to a scholarship endowment of that program.

Harris, a 1979 ECU graduate, is president of RSM Co. in Charlotte, which provides materials for the textile and furniture industries. He played golf as a freshman at ECU.

"Gary and I became friends in school," Harris said. "He was the friend from college that I stayed closest to over the years. He was waiting for a liver transplant when he passed away. He was an avid and loyal fan. He lived and breathed Pirate sports.

"I wanted to do something for a really special friend. You don't get many friends like that in life. I think it would make him extremely happy and proud that this was done in his memory. I can't think of anything I'd rather do for him. He was a great supporter of ECU athletics."

Judson is national Vice President of the National Association of Homebuilders and a past state president of that organization. He works in real estate development in the Charlotte area and has known Dennis Young, Associate Athletic Director for major gifts, for a long time.

"Dennis was a tailback and a pretty good one," Judson said. "We go back a long way -- to the (Coach Clarence) Stasavich era."

Judson, a Stasavich recruit, deeded a portion of a condo to ECU and was happy with the benefits to both parties. Judson was facing capital gains tax on the unit.

"I walked away with no tax consequences and a contribution to the university," Judson said. "It was kind of the best of both worlds. It was a good chance to pay back and benefit East Carolina football.

"I'm pleased with the direction of the football program. They're playing good football and putting the proper emphasis on academics. Skip's a good guy. He connects well with the fans and the athletes."

The Waughs, who reside in Winston-Salem, were students

at East Carolina. Phil matriculated from 1978 to 1982; Jean from 1980 to 1984.

"We had a great experience at ECU and what we're doing is part of giving back," said Phil Waugh, a former Krispy Kreme executive who now directs his own business ventures and investment company, Second Half, LLC.

The Waughs had previously made contributions supporting the university's hospitality program and the baseball stadium.

"We felt so good about the football program and the direction that it's headed that we made an endowment for a football scholarship," said Phil Waugh, who spent time with Coach Holtz before the 2007 season.

"I was very impressed with his plan, his mission and his desire to build East Carolina into the program it should be," Waugh said. "Dennis Young has been great to work with -- talking to Jean and me about what we should do and what was important to the university."

Jody Schulz, a Pirate great in the early 1980s who went on to play in the NFL, hosted an Easy Carolina function at his Maryland restaurant this past summer and Young contacted Gibbs, a former ECU student who lives in that area. Gibbs is from Greenville.

"I had never met Jody face to face," Gibbs said. "He knows somebody I do business with."

Gibbs may involve Schulz in a future project. Gibbs builds affordable housing for groups such as firemen, nurses and teachers as well as housing for lower income groups. He has been buying company cars from Tom Brown of Greenville. He and friends recently installed a multi-purpose synthetic turf field at the local Catholic high school.

"Dennis has a great way about him," Gibbs said. "I support some selected charities up here but I honestly hadn't thought about East Carolina. I liked the way Dennis approached me and I talked to my wife and children about how we might want to direct our charitable trust.

"We started out at \$100,000 (endowment for women's basketball) and in the next couple of years we may bump that up to \$250,000 as some of our other charitable obligations phase out," Gibbs said.

The ECU Athletics Endowment began in 1983 and presently totals approximately \$6.5 million. That still puts the Pirates significantly behind regional schools such as North Carolina (\$140 million) and Duke (\$100 million) in terms of athletic endowments.

For information on contributing to the ECU Educational Foundation, Inc. (Pirate Club), call (252) 757-4540.



A Visit with "The Voice"

SCOUTING THE CONFERENCE USA RÉSUMÉ

By Jeff Charles

Let's have some fun and actually talk football without all the distractions and sub-plots we all seem to deal with these days. This was a good year for the league, and especially the great running backs we had the privilege of watching each week. Conference USA, are you listening? Market this league around the great skill players.

RUNNING BACK OF THE YEAR: It's a three headed monster: Kevin Smith, UCF; Matt Forte, Tulane; Chris Johnson, ECU. You can't single out just one. Smith led the nation in rushing, Forte was second, and Johnson was the leader in all-purpose yardage. These guys can play for any team in the country and we'll see them on Sundays next year.

QUARTERBACK OF THE YEAR: Paul Smith, Tulsa. He's like a coach on the field. Not the most athletic guy, but the smartest. No one stopped Tulsa's high octane offense all year.

COACH OF THE YEAR: George O'Leary, UCF in the East; Todd Graham, Tulsa in the West. O'Leary brought the Knights back from a losing season last year and Graham, in his first season, kept Tulsa on top in the West after the departure of Steve Kragthorpe, now the head man at Louisville.

RAW DEAL: How do you fire Jeff Bower at Southern Miss? The dean of the league's coaches was a model of consistency and success in Hattiesburg. Seventeen years of loyalty and dedicated service snuffed out in a decision USM is going to regret. The very fabric of USM's football program has been ripped apart. Congratulations Golden Eagles, you've just come back to the pack with every other mid-major program in America. Jeff Bower set you apart. He's gone now. Get ready to hire a new coach every three or four years.

BEST FANS: ECU, hands down. Pirate supporters packed Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium-Bagwell Field in record numbers with the best atmosphere in the Conference. The feeling here is back like it was in the Steve Logan glory days.

TOUGH LUCK COACH: Phil Bennett, SMU. The Mustangs were competitive but just couldn't win games. Bennett is a class guy and everyone wishes him well.

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: UTEP. The Miners were never the same after the Pirates shocked them in the Sun Bowl. Coach Mike Price's star has fallen in El Paso.

NIGHTMARE COVER: Carlos Singleton, Memphis. He's a 6' 9" wide receiver. He's becoming a football player too. NFL Scouts are starting to drool.

LONG WAY TO GO: UAB. Neil Calloway's first year was tough. The Blazers force fed a lot of young players.

COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: Mark Snyder, Marshall. He better win next year or else. It will be his fourth season in Huntington. Herd fans are spoiled with the great success in the 1990's, first in the Southern Conference and then in the MAC. Give the administration credit. They've not bowed to fan pressure and are giving the former Marshall defensive back another year.

BEST STADIUM: UCF's beautiful new Bright House Networks venue. It's state-of-the-art, right on the Orlando school's campus. It will take the Knight's program to another level.

SOLID COACH: Art Briles, Houston. He's taken the Cougars to four bowl games in the last five years. He's an offensive guy which makes him attractive on the open market – and Baylor is reaping the benefits.

RISING COACH: Skip Holtz, ECU. The foundation of success he's built is being noticed, as it should be. It's a compliment to ECU's football program. His approach is sound and solid. Not a flash in the pan philosophy. It's a fact of life. He'll draw the attention of other programs. He won at UConn, he's winning at ECU, and his last name is Holtz. It's a good resume.

COMING ATTRACTION: Improvement to Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium. An end zone expansion with 8,000 additional seats and new Press Box. It's an arms race. You need to keep up.

GREAT GUYS: My crew on the Pirate ISP Sports Network. Sideline Reporter Marty Fuerer just completed his fifteenth year. He's a terrific human being. David Horn, our Engineer-Producer, Booth Host, is the best. A great asset to our broadcasts each week. Kevin Monroe, our Analyst, had a good first year taking over for ECU legend Carlester Crumpler. Aaron Beaulieu and Gary Overton make my job easier as spotters.

A BIG THANK YOU: To the Pirate Nation. It's a privilege to be your "Voice". 'Til next time, keep Painting 'em Purple.

UNDERSTANDING THE SECONDARY

By Kevin Monroe

Playing defensive back can be a lonely job. Matching up one-on-one with a receiver with the expectation that your man won't catch the ball is a ton of pressure. Add to that, you are sometimes lined up 20 yards or more away from your nearest teammate. The fans notice every mistake, and when the receiver you are covering catches the football, it's considered your fault. People in the stands don't always understand that the defensive back may have been in zone coverage and not man-to-man.

Playing defensive back means starting each play at a disadvantage. You are asked to run backwards to an undisclosed location and cover a receiver that is running forward to a predetermined spot. To play the position successfully you must possess the following skills: Speed, Agility, tackling, ball skills, composure, fearlessness, short-memory. A defensive back that has all of these skills is one that you can count on to make a big play just when the team needs one. Let's take a look at how each of these specific skills makes a defensive back successful.

SPEED: A defensive back has to be as fast as the guy he is covering, but you never know who that might be. Safeties usually don't cover speedy wide receivers in a one-on-one situation without help. As long as they have 4.6 (40 yard dash speed) or better, they should be fine. Corners need to be faster than safeties, and it's expected that they run at least a 4.5, though a 4.4 or better is preferred. Speed is a trait that cannot be taught. It can be improved through technique and training, but either you have speed or you don't. Defensive backs need speed for several reasons, but the most important of those is closing speed. When a receiver gets past the DB, he needs that speed to be able to close ground before the ball arrives.

AGILITY: Having good speed becomes irrelevant if there is no agility to go with it. Being able to stop and start with ease and change directions is even more important than running fast. As I mentioned earlier, the defensive back is forced to react to the receivers' movements, and good agility is the key to making those reactions. The majority of that agility comes from the hips. A good defensive back needs very fluid hips to change direction with ease.

TACKLING: Corners don't have to tackle as much as safeties do, but they still need to know how to tackle. One could argue that defensive backs need to know how to tackle more than any other defender because they are often in one-on-one situations. Making those one-on-one tackles can sometimes be touchdown saving tackles. East Carolina's defensive backs coach Rick Smith is a firm believer in solid tackling, and he teaches it weekly. Not all of the ECU DBs can cover but each of them can tackle well.

BALL SKILLS: Being able to cover receivers is just half the battle; the most important part of the play is playing the ball in the air. The thing that disappointed me most about the East Carolina defensive backs this year was their inability to play the ball in the air. Defensive backs have to remember that the quarterback isn't throwing the ball to them, therefore they have to maintain position on the receiver and then attack the football. Attacking the ball means jumping for a deep ball or coming back to an under-thrown ball. The receiver usually sees the ball coming first and the DB must react before the receiver does. Intercepting the ball is a bonus, but the defensive back's main priority is to make sure the receiver doesn't catch it.

COMPOSURE: Some would think just quarterbacks should worry about keeping their composure during the play. Not true. The reason that most defensive backs get long passes caught on them or pass interference penalties is because they lose their composure and panic. When the ball is in the air, DBs must trust their skills and relax throughout the play. When the adrenaline starts going and their hearts start pounding, they sometimes panic and make bad decisions.

FEARLESSNESS: Playing defensive back means realizing you won't have any help on most plays. Safeties and especially corners need to embrace this fact and take it personal when someone catches the ball in their area. There is a reason that corners are sometimes the most arrogant or cocky players on the team. As a corner you can't fear receivers, and you have to believe that nobody can beat you for a touchdown. Corners and Safeties alike should dare the quarterback to throw the ball their way and be confident that they will make the play.

SHORT MEMORY: If you play defensive back long enough you are going to get beat for a touchdown. It's just a simple law of physics that a good throw and a good catch will almost always beat good defense. That being said, if you allow getting beat to consume you, it will show in how you play the rest of the game. Getting beat happens, but you have to have a short memory and forget that it happened. Some of the best corners in the NFL get beat all the time, but they bounce back and make great plays, and everyone forgets they got beat.

Only the best athletes play defensive back because it takes the speed and agility of a running back, plus the composure and fearlessness of a quarterback. Helping the linebackers on running plays and playing all alone during passing plays is a lot to ask from a player. The Pirates have several gifted athletes playing in the secondary that haven't quite figured it all out yet, but with the continued tutelage of Rick Smith and graduate assistant coach Tim Carter (former college & professional defensive back) this group will be a lot better next season.



Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes

by Al Myatt

STATE WIN STILL SWEET

Darrell Jenkins made all four of his free throws in the final 20 seconds to prevent an N.C. State comeback and provide East Carolina with a 75-69 win over the Wolfpack in Williams Arena at Minges Coliseum on Dec. 8.

The Pirates never had beaten an ACC opponent in men's basketball, an 0-57 losing streak that spanned portions of five decades. The crowd of 7,623 was loud and proud of the achievement, gathering at mid-court in an emotional postgame celebration.

"I've never been a part of something like that before," said Jenkins, a 5-foot-11 senior guard from Anaheim, Cal. "I've played in big games but that feeling was overwhelming -- the crowd rushing the floor, giving us hugs and cheering us on.

"It's love and I'll remember that for the rest of my life."

HINNANT'S HOT HAND

Junior guard Sam Hinnant hit six of his eight 3-point attempts against the Wolfpack and finished with 30 points. His dramatic three at the end of the first half tied the game at 38. His bomb from beyond the arc on the right side put the Pirates ahead to stay at 67-64 with 2:13 remaining. Cory Farmer stole the ensuing inbounds pass and scored to give ECU a 69-64 advantage.

"We're from Conference USA," Hinnant said. "We get up for ACC teams. We see them play on TV every night."

TIGERS PROVIDE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Credit interim hoops coach Mack McCarthy with getting ACC teams to Greenville and greatly enhancing this season's home schedule. Before the Wolfpack arrived, Clemson became the first ACC team since 1969 to play at ECU on Dec. 5.

The Tigers, ranked No. 17 nationally at the time, took an 82-67 win over the Pirates but McCarthy said his team learned from that experience as well as a 68-65 win at 2006 NCAA Tournament Cinderella, George Mason, on Dec. 2.

"The fact that we came from being behind at George Mason on the road played a big factor in (the N.C. State) game," said the ECU coach.

The Wolfpack scored the first nine points of the second half against the Pirates for a 47-38 lead but ECU kept its composure and came back.

The sheer volume of noise generated by the ECU fans required an adjustment on the Pirates' part. Many of the ECU students on the lower level of the arena stood throughout the game with the Pack. The place was rocking with "Purple Haze" and "Welcome to the Jungle" among the songs played during timeouts.

"Wednesday (vs. Clemson), we got used to the loud crowd and the level of intensity that ACC teams play with," McCarthy said.

ECU IMPROVES BOARD SCORE

One huge factor in the Clemson game was the Tigers' 50-26 command in rebounding.

"They just kept shooting it on their end until they got it in," lamented McCarthy in the aftermath.

But the ECU coach also realized that the Pirates could prevent similar damage by the Wolfpack.

"I was excited about the Clemson game from the standpoint that I knew our mistakes were correctable," McCarthy said.

Despite facing an N.C. State frontline that averaged 6-foot-9 without a starter over 6-8, the Pirates managed to out-rebound the Pack, 34-33. Slender sophomore John Fields came off the bench to grab a game-high 11 caroms for ECU.

"I had to sit with Coach Mack and watch the tape of the Clemson game and I didn't want to do that again," Fields said. "Mack fixed things after the Clemson game."

NO MORE ANONYMITY

ECU hasn't had a winning season on the hardwood since the 1996-97 team went 17-10. Lack of success can affect the players' self-perception, according to Jenkins, who finished with 11 points in the monumental triumph over the Wolfpack. That outcome put the Pirates at 4-5.

"This means a lot," Jenkins said. "When we lose, (sometimes) we lose bad. Sometimes it's embarrassing to go to class. But this is a big confidence boost.

"I'm very proud to wear this jersey."

Jenkins was pulling at his jersey and showing the "EAST CAROLINA" on his chest to the fans in the late stages of the State game.

"We're going to be wearing our (ECU) gear every day -- to class, to Harris Teeter, wherever we go," Jenkins said. "We're really excited and, hopefully, people around here will get excited for us, too."

HOLLAND'S TAKE

ECU athletic director Terry Holland has been involved in his share of monumental basketball triumphs, leading Virginia to its first ACC Tournament championship in 1976 and subsequently to a pair of NCAA Tournament Final Four berths.

He said whether the win over the Wolfpack will provide a springboard to future basketball success will depend in part on comparable degrees of fan support.

"We can have that same game atmosphere for every

game," Holland said. "We don't have to wait for N.C. State or anyone else to come to town. If we are only going to support our team in that manner when we perceive it to be a big game, then we will be allowing our opponents to control our potential in basketball."

Duke fans, for example, provide their team with incredible support at home, regardless of the opponent.

"ECU has hired talented coaches, ADs and marketing gurus over the years with only minimal success," Holland said. "The only thing that has the power to truly change, once and for all, the negative momentum of our basketball program is our Pirate Nation."

"You (the Pirate Nation) have shown the impact you can have on our football program and against N.C. State you got a taste of what you can do in basketball as partners with this coaching staff."

Holland contrasted the atmosphere for the win over State with the 72-57 loss to Winthrop, which drew only 4,028 fans on Nov. 28.

"The game atmosphere and the performance on the court (against Winthrop) could easily have been the death knell for our program if the team had not found a way to win on the road against a strong George Mason team and if we had not been fortunate enough to have two ACC teams at home for the first time ever," Holland said.

"Coach Mack and the players have helped us get back to a point where we have hope again, but without an exceptional show of force by the Pirate Nation, the coaches' and players' efforts alone will not be able to move us forward. Together we can do it -- but neither the Pirate Nation nor a coaching staff of any sort can do it alone. We have proven that over and over."

AH, YES, THE BOWL

It's rare that basketball upstages football in the pecking order at ECU, especially when the Pirates are preparing for a bowl trip. Extra workouts are indeed a valuable benefit for programs that reach the postseason.

"It's like an extra spring practice," said Coach Skip Holtz, who has guided ECU to back-to-back bowls for the first time since 2001. "It's been great to give some of our younger players some action and get them involved in the offense and defense."

"They aren't just looking at cards anymore as they are able to get into the huddle and keep learning the terminology, which will pay dividends for us a year from now."

The span between ECU's last regular season game, a 35-12 win over Tulane on Senior Day at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium on Nov. 24, and the Hawaii Bowl contest against Boise State on Dec. 23, also gave some injured players some time to heal.

VONTA PLAYS SANTA

Former ECU standout Vonta Leach signed a 4-year deal with the Houston Texans worth \$8.3 million prior to the 2007 season. The NFL fullback returned home to Robeson County on Dec. 15 to share some of his wealth.

Leach distributed \$100 gift cards at the Lumberton Wal-Mart so that deserving families could get their children Christmas

presents. His Vonta Leach Foundation will provide 50 food baskets with turkey and vegetables to needy families for Christmas.

"I didn't never have a lot where I came from," Leach told The Fayetteville Observer.

The former Pirate doesn't live at the North Pole but he was indeed Santa Claus for a number of children in his home county.

Leach is getting it done on the field, too. He had the final touchdown on a 1-yard plunge in a 31-13 Thursday night win over Denver before his trip home.



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OLYMPIC SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

LADY PIRATES NOW

THE TARGETED

By Bethany Bradsher

Here's an effective recipe for the weeks preceding a long period of road games: Pull of an emotional, significant win right before your trip and watch the adrenaline carry into the string of away games.

That's what the Lady Pirates basketball team tried in December, when an exhilarating 89-82 win over No. 24 North Carolina State set the tone for subsequent games that included UNC-Wilmington, Virginia Tech and Georgetown.

The players, fresh off an exhilarating Conference USA championship win in March, hoped that the Wolfpack victory would be the seminal win of the season – the one that represented the pieces of the program snapping together as the team rolls toward conference competition in January.

"That was a real big win," said sophomore Shana Franks. "That did a lot. That set the tempo for the rest of the season, I believe."

Three Pirate players – juniors Jasmine Young and LaCoya Terry and senior Nicole Days – scored in double figures in the Wolfpack win, and many other Lady Pirate players contributed significantly. As they looked back on that afternoon, the players said they hoped that they could bottle that unity, teamwork and productivity that they saw only hints of in the early part of the season.

"We showed that a little bit before, doing small things, but after the State game it was a big confidence boost, like we can do anything," Franks said.

At the time of the State victory, the Pirates were 4-5, with some frustrating losses to teams like High Point and Winthrop in November. Several factors were at play in their slow start – the loss of center Cherie Mills to graduation, youth and inexperience in key roles – but one new phenomenon also entered the picture this season – the baggage from the Pirates' previous success.

In March, the women on the 2006-'07 team surprised Conference USA and rallied the Pirate Nation by becoming the first ECU squad ever to win a conference title. That triumph put them in the unusual position of being the opponent with an extra-

large bulls-eye on their backs.

"We're excited knowing that we were conference champions last year," said junior LaCoya Terry, who was named C-USA Co-player of the week for a 19-point, 10-assist performance that marked the first double-double of her season and the second of her career. "We just know that everybody's going to be gunning for us, looking to beat us, because we set the standard last year."

Step one in the quest to repeat their title begins Jan. 5, when they travel to Marshall for the first C-USA match-up.

The Lady Pirates were picked third in the preseason C-USA poll by a close margin, behind Tulane and UTEP, and Young was named to the preseason all-conference squad.

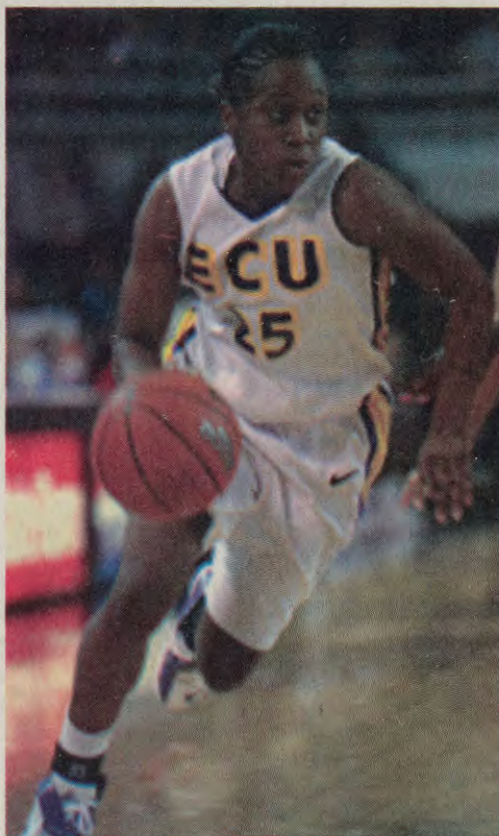
Part of the Lady Pirates' adjustment has involved learning to live without Cherie Mills in the post. Mills, who led the team in scoring for the past two years, was the kind of player who could seemingly produce points out of nowhere when the game was on the line. In her absence, senior Days and sophomore Lauren Cochran have each staked a claim under the basket.

The team's four freshmen – Shaundra Ashford, Tiahana Bowens, Kim Gay and Allison Spivey – are contributing more and more as the weeks go by, head coach Sharon Baldwin-Tener said. "I'm very encouraged by what the freshmen can do," she said.

Terry, one of the team's vocal leaders, has encouraged the newcomers to continually raise the bar. And if they need a visual aid to help spur them on when January and February get long, she'll remind them of the sights, sounds and emo-

tions of the N.C. State game.

"The State game was where we need to be as a team," Terry said. "That's the way we need to come out and play every game, not just against State. Hopefully we've got confidence now to know we can go out and play that way, so hopefully we can build off of that and go out for the rest of the games and do what we need to do to win."



LaCoya Terry (ECU Media Relations)

"CHAMPIONS" COLLECTION

"It's Not Just A Game Anymore"

2007 marked the 13th edition of the "Champions Collection". Last year's edition recognized the continued improvement of ECU Athletics and particularly the ECU football program under Head Coach Skip Holtz. As we continue to charge forward, we continue to celebrate the past 100 years as a university.

The "Pirate Nation" are the greatest fans in college athletics, and they responded with 110% effort again in 2007. Pirate fans are always "Champions".

This is the final listing for the new members and those who met the 110% increase for 2007.

Here's how they qualified:

1. Give 110% - 2007 annual contribution increased by

10% over 2006 contribution (minimum \$30 increase/ maximum \$110 increase).

2006 GIFT WAS	2007 INCREASE
\$75 - \$300	\$30 minimum
\$300 - \$1,100	10%
\$1,100 or more	\$110 maximum

2. Join at \$110 or more - Any new donor in 2007 who contributed \$110 or more qualified.

3. Recruit a new \$110 donor - every Pirate Club member who recruited a new member contributing \$110 or more in 2007 qualified.

New Members

(as of 11/27/07)

Ross Allen - Winston-Salem
Gary G. Anderson - Greenville
Robert Bizzell - La Grange
Steven Blackstock - Kitty Hawk
Crystal Dawson - Stantonsburg
Robert Edwards - New Bern
Charles Evans - Raleigh

Tom Freed - Greenville
Steven & Lorraine Jarvis - Como
Tim Klaumann - New Bern
Carrie Mercer - Rolesville
Elaine Minton - Greenville
William B. Nye - Wilmington
Heather Sutorius - Wilkesboro
Deborah Viti - Greenville
Billy Weaver - Greenville

110% Members

(as of 11/27/07)

Ken & Angela Bowling - Greensboro
G. Parker Davis - Wilson
Elite Fence Company - Greenville
Albert Holloman - Winterville
Ironwood Development, Inc. - Greenville

Maggie Johnson - Greenville
William A. Johnson - Southport
Jared Plummer - Boca Raton, FL

Thank you, Pirate Nation, for helping us surpass our goals!



NOTE: All lithographs are numbered and will be filled on the date qualifying annual contribution is paid in full.



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ENDOWMENT BUILDING INITIATIVE

In addition to the outright funding of an endowment over a five-year pledge contribution period to the Educational Foundation in support of student-athlete scholarships, Pirate Club members are offered other unique options in providing endowment support. Those options include irrevocable planned gifts, cash build-up life insurance policies, and will bequests. Although such gifts do not provide an immediate benefit to the Educational Foundation in providing scholarship support to ECU Athletics' nineteen sports program, such gifts do add significantly to the Foundation's endowment fund over time.

In the area of irrevocable planned gifts, the IRS provides certain income tax saving benefits, which make for example charitable remainder unitrusts and charitable remainder annuity trusts excellent vehicles for donors to take advantage of in helping the Educational Foundation's endowment building effort. Individuals who are in or reaching their retirement years, may wish to re-employ low cost basis assets they hold into more income-producing assets necessary to provided an increased stream of income during their retirement years. Charitable remainder unitrusts and annuity trusts also provide individuals the opportunity to avoid capital gains taxes on the sale and reinvestment of low cost basis assets, a stream of income during their retirement years based upon assets re-employed, a future gift to their favorite charity or charities, and an income tax deduction based upon the present value of the future charitable remainder interest in the year the trust is funded.

In comparing a charitable remainder unitrust to a charitable annuity trust, the following differences are worth noting:

- Unitrusts provide cash flow streams to the donor which may vary, with payouts based upon a fixed percentage being applied to the net fair market value of the trust's assets determined annually. On the other hand, an annuity trust provides for a fixed payout, which cannot be less than five percent (5%) of the market value of assets initially gifted to the trust.
- Unitrusts can be added to over time, whereas in the case of an annuity trust, additional assets cannot be contributed to the trust.

In addition to benefits noted above to a donor who establishes a unitrust or an annuity trust providing the Educational Foundation with an irrevocable remainder interest, the donor will receive the following Pirate Club benefits:

- Cumulative giving credit for priority point generation purposes, equal to the charitable income tax deduction the donor receives in the year the trust is established
- Plaque recognition on the endowment wall located on the second floor of the Murphy Center
- Recognition in ECU football media guides and game programs with other endowment donors

Another vehicle for contributions by a donor to the building of the Educational Foundation's student-athlete scholarship endowment fund over time is the use of life insurance policies providing for the build-up of cash surrender values. Endowment recognition is provided for such policies with a face values of \$100,000 or more, and which name the Educational Foundation as both owner and beneficiary under the policies. In gifting an insurance policy to the Educational Foundation, a donor will receive an income tax contribution deduction for premiums paid on the policy. Also, a donor will receive the following Pirate Club benefits from gifting a life insurance policy under the above mentioned guidelines:

- Cumulative giving credit for premiums paid on a policy by donor, and in the case of a gifting of an existing policy, cumulative giving credit equal to the policy's net cash surrender value on date policy is gifted to the Educational Foundation
- Plaque recognition on the insurance endowment wall located on the second floor of the Murphy Center
- Recognition in ECU Football media guides and game programs with other insurance endowment donors

The last type of unique endowment gifting opportunities which can have a significant future impact on building the Educational Foundation's endowment fund is through a donor's provision of a will bequest. Since a will bequest is revocable in nature, the Educational Foundation is more conservative in providing a donor cumulative giving credit for Pirate Club priority point generation purposes. Cumulative giving credit is based upon the present value of a will bequest made to benefit the Educational Foundation, using generally accepted mortality tables. The present value of a will bequest is further discounted, based upon the donor's age as follows:

<u>Donor's Age</u>	<u>Probability Factor</u>
70 and above	75%
60 - 69	50%
50 - 59	25%

Further, a donor will receive the following additional benefits from providing a will bequest naming the Educational Foundation as a beneficiary, for those will bequests having a probability value of \$100,000 or more:

- Plaque recognition on the endowment wall located on the second floor of the Murphy Center
- Recognition in ECU football media guides and game programs along with other donors providing will bequests

There are indeed a number of ways Pirate Club members can help the Educational Foundation build its endowment fund over time, to a level that will enable the Foundation along with annual fund contributions it receives, to provide full-scholarship funding to the Pirate Athletics Program.

For more information on how you can participate in the Educational Foundation's endowment fund building effort, please call Dennis Young or Matt Maloney at 252-737-4540. Together we can help insure the financial integrity of ECU Athletics for generations to come!



Harley-Davidson Raffle Winner

Congrats to **Jim Hardy**,
winner of the Harley Raffle!

Thank you to everyone who participated in this raffle and helped us to raise over \$35,000 for student-athlete scholarships.

Fall 2007 Graduate Athletes

Baseball

Michael Flye

BS in Chemistry

Football

Matthew Butler

BS in Criminal Justice

Kyle Chase

BS in Family & Community
Services

Robert Good

BS in Construction Management

Phillip Henry

BS in Communication

Pierre Parker

BS in Communication

Steven Rogers

BS in Communication

Frederick Wilson

BS in Communication

Corey Bass

BS in Communication

Softball

Keli Harrell

BS in Family & Community
Services

Joyce Roodenburg

BA in Communication

Men's Swimming

Emre Aydin

BSBA in Management

Matthew Donohue

BA in Chemistry

Women's Swimming

Kate Gordon

BS in Physical Education

Men's Tennis

Michael Catalano

BA in Communication

Women's Track/CC

Brie Berkowitz

BS in Physical Education

**Congratulations to all
our Fall 2007 Graduates!**

PIRATE ATHLETES SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Each academic year the department of athletics sets a community service goal for its student-athletes and each year the student-athletes exceed expectations. Last year they surpassed their goal of 3,800 hours with a year-end total of 4,018 hours of service. This year they are aiming for a goal of 4,100 hours. Teams compete for the highest number of total hours per student-athlete. Jamie Quinn, community service coordinator for the department and former member of the ECU women's golf team, leads the program. "Every year, the competition for the highest number of community service hours becomes greater and greater," states Quinn, "But while the community service competition brings out the competitive nature in all of our student-athletes, it isn't just about winning. Student-athletes see volunteerism as a way to say thank you to the Greenville community for all the support the Athletics Department receives. The drive to assist those in need is readily apparent and incredibly strong within our student-athletes. As of December, they are at 2,755 hours; this is well over half way with 8 months left in the academic year!"

Each team decides how they would like to volunteer within the community. Some teams determine a number of volunteer hours for each team member to complete while other teams select agency projects that require the entire team to work together. Agencies benefiting from the services of ECU student-athletes this year have included the Food Bank of Eastern NC, the Pitt County Council on Aging, Habitat for Humanity, the Boys and Girls Club of Pitt County and Pitt County Public Schools.

Regardless of how the teams decide to volunteer within the community the goal is the same – "The hope is that student-athletes will learn from their volunteer experiences here at ECU, take what they learn into their own communities once they graduate and thus become strong leaders in their neighborhoods," states Nita Boyce, Assistant Athletics Director for Student Development.



ECU student-athletes gathered over 2,900 pounds of canned food for the Food Bank of Eastern North Carolina.



Shane Small of baseball shares a minute with a small fan at St. Paul Church's Trunk or Treat.



Henrique Viana of men's tennis learns how to make reindeer ears at the Christmas Party for the ECU Friends mentoring program.



The men's golf team donates their time to Habitat for Humanity.



Left: The softball team packs meal boxes for the Council on Aging.

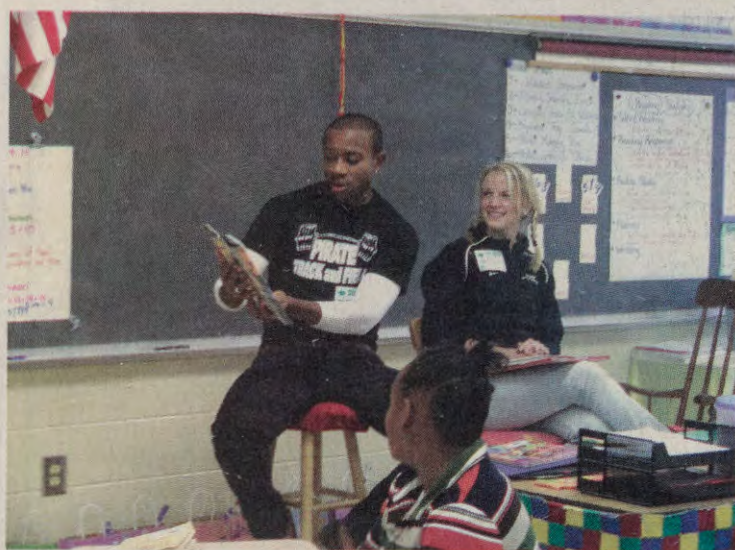
"The work of the Council on Aging moves forward through the time and effort of generous volunteers. The ECU football and softball teams recently put together bags of food goods for our homebound senior clients. The two teams put together approximately 190 bags. With each bag containing food for 12 days, that amounts to almost 2,300 meals to be given out for the Christmas holidays. We are grateful here at the Council on Aging for the effort and the spirit they showed in this very important project."

- Gus Benson, Coordinator of Nutrition Services



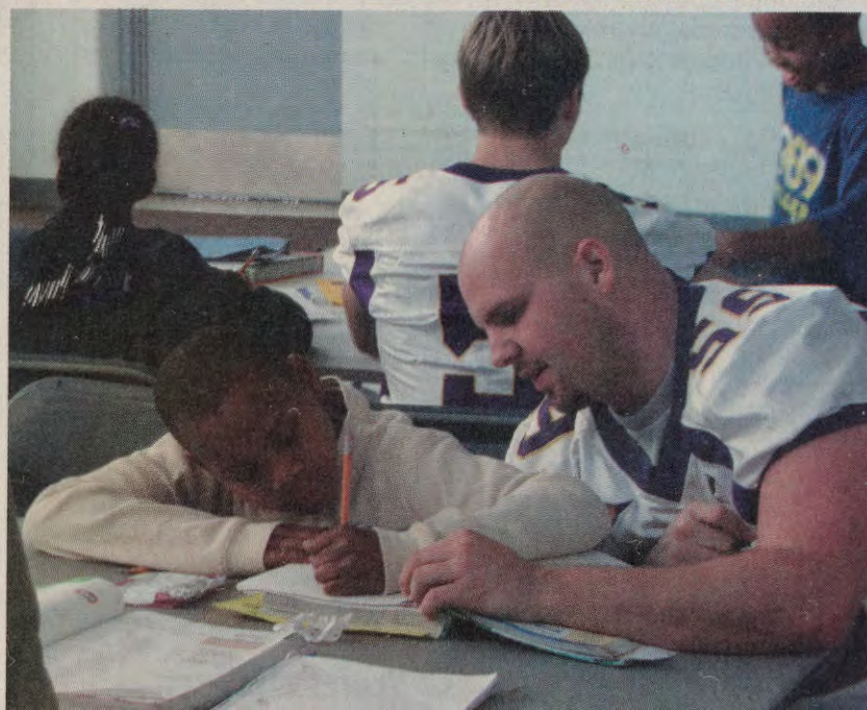
"Our students were so excited to have an ECU athlete read a book to their class. We really strive to promote reading at Wintergreen Intermediate, since reading with fluency carries over to success in all other subject areas. The visit from the athletes was a tremendous demonstration of how important reading can be to success in all areas of life."

- Beverly M. Outwater, Media Coordinator, Wintergreen Intermediate

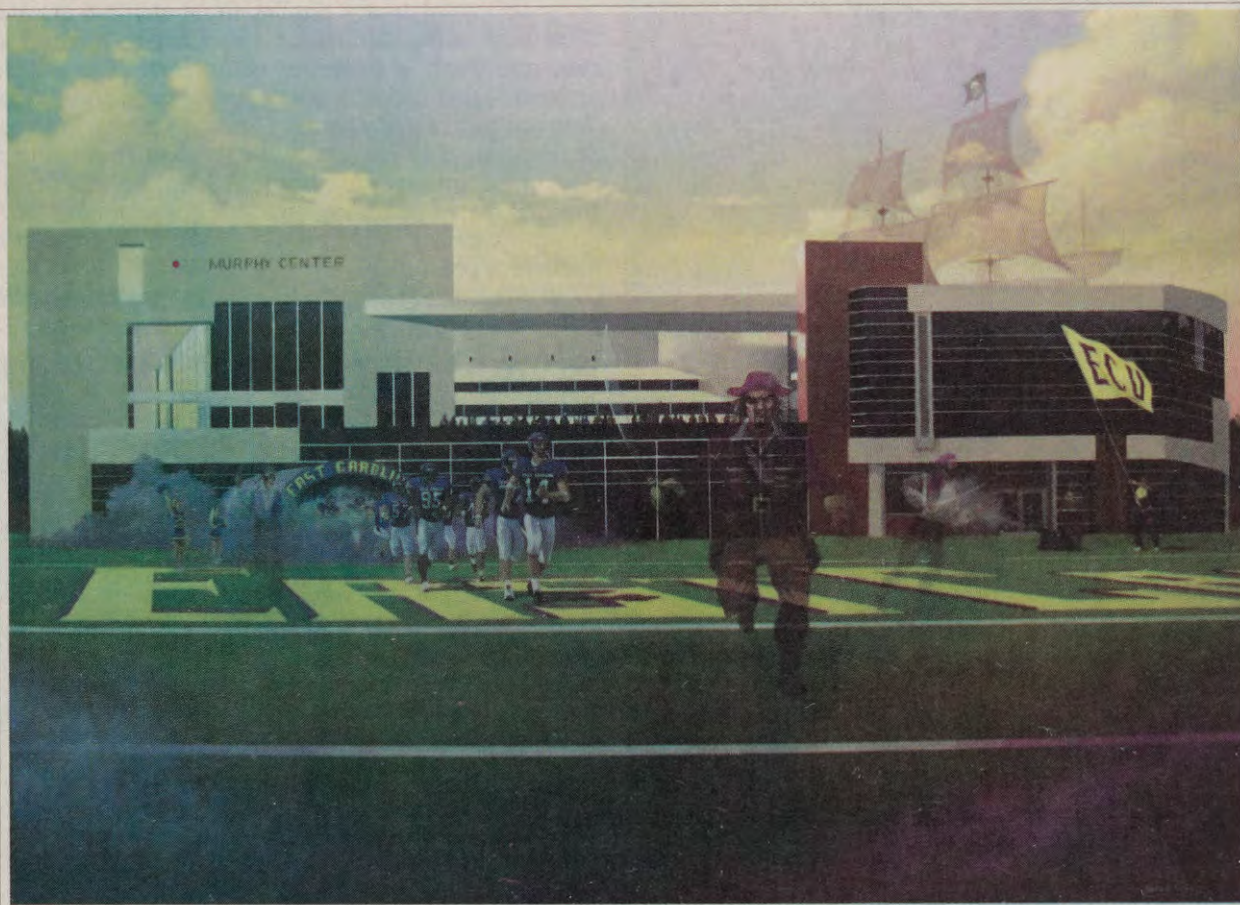


Center Left: Michael Harris of men's track and Erinn Latta of women's cross country read to students at Wintergreen Intermediate.

Above: Paige Clark of women's cross country reads to students at Wintergreen Intermediate.



Left: Wilson Raynor of football helps a student with his reading for the Greenville Police Athletic League (PAL) program at C.M. Eppes Recreation Center.



"Spirit of the East"

The East Carolina Pirate Club in partnership with **CollegiateArt, Inc.** commissioned N.C. Artist Jeremy Sams to create the above painting. This compelling artistic print, depicts the well recognized East Carolina Pirate Ship with...Ghostly Pirate Spirits... leading the football team and Pirate Nation into battle through the purple haze of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium. Central to the concept are spirit images integrated in a contemporary real life campus setting which has been developed in partnership with the institution. These powerful images capture the heritage, pride and emotion that embody ECU and major college athletics. Order your limited edition collectible print today:

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Tucker Hartley
Carter Herman
Claire Hollingsworth
Hayes Johnson
Ashley Jones
Jordan Moser
Adam Norris
Elizabeth Ponzi
Alex Sayre
Carter Searce
Danielle Smart
Copeland Spell
Abigail Grace Staley
Garrett Stoehr
Erin Tucci
Camden Mae Wallace
Blake Robert Walters
Madison Ward
Aubrey Warren
Sydney Jane Warren
Thomas W. Wharton II
Jenna Wilkinson
Avery Elizabeth Williams
Taylor Williams

JUNIOR PIRATE CLUB

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Will Corbin
Davis Edwards
Kevin Clark Stallings, Jr

KIDS CLUB - FEB.

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Rodney Gray Alston
Mallory Reagan Askew
Cameron Baldree
Trey Benton
Charleston Daly
Conner Davenport
Cooper Epps
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Grant Flowers
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Hailey Lynne Huseth
Hunter Kinion
Caleb Knieper
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Blake Miles
Robert Tristan Murray
Max Nalavany
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Sage Newton
Emma Catherine Owens
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Tyler Pettway
Logan Robinson
Joshua Russell
Hunter Sanders
Emory Simpson
Thomas Sydney
Caroline Wainwright
Taylor Wetherbee
Elizabeth Worthington

JUNIOR PIRATE CLUB

Logan Shackelford



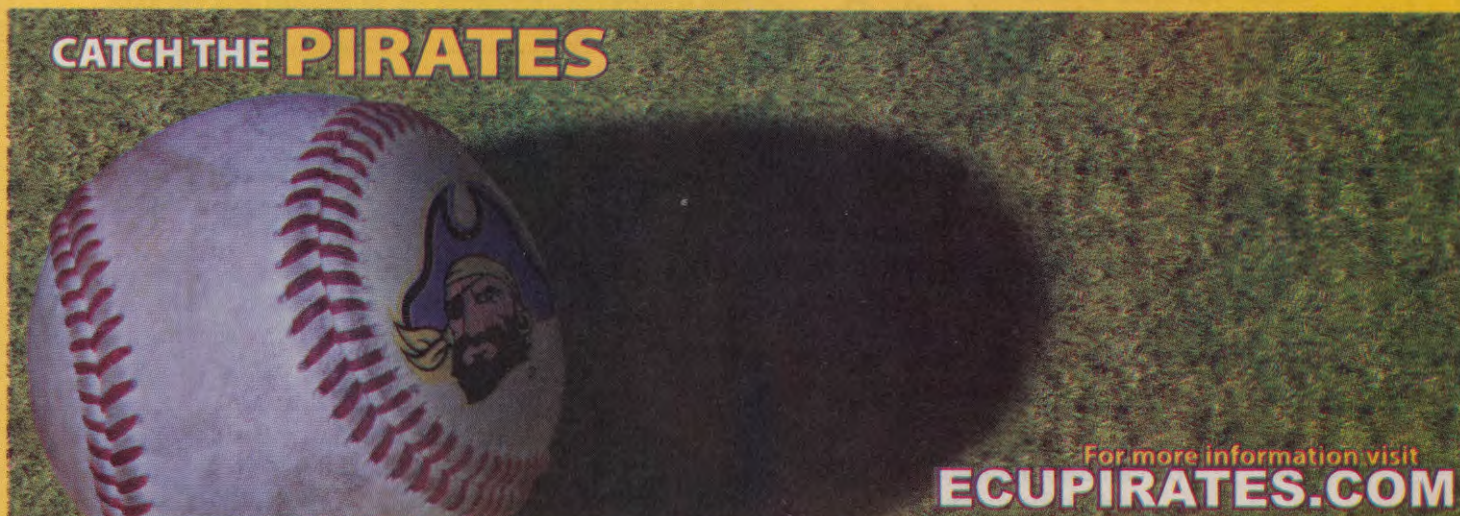
**Happy
Birthday,
Kids!**



Promotional Activities Involving Student-Athletes

One of the important aspects of being a student-athlete at East Carolina University is involvement in promotional and community service activities. The Athletics Department's staff and coaches encourage and support the student-athlete's participation in these activities. NCAA regulations permit participation in specified promotional activities for East Carolina University, Conference-USA, recognized entities of the university (e.g., fraternity, sorority or student government organization), or a non-institutional charitable, educational or nonprofit agency. This participation may involve using a student-athlete's name, picture or appearance to support its charitable or educational activities or to support activities considered incidental to the student-athlete's participation in intercollegiate athletics. Such activities are permissible provided the following conditions are met:

- Written approval to participate from the Athletics Director or designated non-coaching staff member;
- The activity or project does not involve co-sponsorship, advertisement or promotion by a commercial agency;
- The student-athlete's name or picture of a student-athlete may not appear on printed items (e.g., poster, calendar, etc.) that includes a reproduction of a commercial product if a trademark or logo also appears on the item;
- The student-athlete does not miss class;
- All funds derived from the activity or project go directly to East Carolina University, Conference-USA, or the charitable, educational or nonprofit agency;
- The student-athlete may only accept actual and necessary expenses from East Carolina University, Conference-USA, or the charitable, educational or nonprofit agency related to participation in such activity. The student-athlete may not receive any additional benefits in conjunction with the activity;
- The student-athlete's name, picture or appearance may not be used to promote the commercial ventures of any non-profit agency;
- Any commercial items with names or pictures of student-athletes may be sold only at the East Carolina University and outlets controlled by the permissible charitable or educational organization;
- The student-athlete and an authorized representative of the charitable, educational or nonprofit agency must sign a release statement ensuring that the student-athlete's name, image or appearance is used in a manner consistent with NCAA legislation.



Member's Corner



Matthew Malone, BS Criminal Justice, 2000 married Lisa Malone on May 19th, 2007 on N. Topsail Island, NC. Then on June 25th, Matthew was promoted to Police Corporal at the Wilmington Police Department. The Malones reside in Castle Hayne (Wilmington), NC.

Troy Epps married Tina Kelly on September 29, 2007. Troy attended ECU from 92-95 and is currently Carteret County's Pirate Club President.

Michael Darrow of Durham, NC was recently featured in the October 1-14, 2007 issue of Auto Remarketing. The article was titled "North Carolina Dealer Mines Pirate Gold as State Quality Dealer". Darrow was named the 2007 quality dealer of the year for North and South Carolina by the Carolinas Independent Automobile Dealers Association. Michael attended ECU in the 1980s and lives with his wife Carol and their three children in Durham.

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East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858-4353

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