THE DAILY CLIPS

June 1, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
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'Dr. Soos' getting her start at East Carolina University

By Amanda Memrick

Kelli Soos carried around a doctor’s kit as a child. The Ashbrook senior used to take her medical kit to preschool and offer help.

“Since I was 6-years-old, I’ve had a passion for helping children and medicine,” Soos said.

Soos’s desire to help others didn’t fade as she got older. She wants to turn that passion into a career and become a pediatrician.

“I’ll be Dr. Soos, children’s doctor,” Soos said.

She’ll get a boost to making her dream a reality after becoming one of 20 students selected for the EC Scholars program at East Carolina University.

The four-year merit scholarship recognizes academic performance, commitment to community engagement and leadership skills. Recipients receive a scholarship for four years, along with a stipend for study abroad. The scholarship is valued at about $45,000.

Soos applied to six schools. East Carolina and Clemson University were her top choices. She felt that East Carolina was where she was supposed to attend after visiting the campus.

“East Carolina felt like Gastonia. It felt like home,” Soos said. “It was more of a community than just a college campus.”

Shaving off the cost of earning a medical degree didn’t hurt, either. She’ll have to take four years of medical school and two years of specialized college training in addition to four years as an undergraduate to become Dr. Soos.

To qualify to be an EC Scholar, students must have an SAT score above 1300 and class ranking in the top 5 percent of their high school class. EC Scholars must maintain a 3.5 GPA, participate in the university’s Honors
College and perform 24 hours of community service each semester. They must complete a study abroad experience and a senior honors project.

Soos credited her community service as a reason for earning the school’s top scholarship. Soos, captain of the varsity cheerleading squad, started Project Hope this year to give back to the community in memory of the late Laura Newman, Ashbrook cheerleading coach, whose tragic death in 2010 left its imprint on the school.

Soos is also involved in many clubs that do community service, such as the Environmental club and Civinettes.

Soos is the daughter of Ritchie and Joanne Soos.

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DeCock: ECU Pirates given chance to prove themselves

By Luke DeCock - staff columnist - ldecock@newsobserver.com

CHAPEL HILL–East Carolina already has lost to North Carolina this season, may have been the last team into the NCAA baseball field and hasn’t won in Chapel Hill since 1994. The Pirates also have the chance to make everyone forget all of that this weekend.

As the second seed in North Carolina’s regional at Boshamer Stadium, the Pirates have everything to prove: locally, nationally and to themselves.

The Pirates have lost 14 straight against the Tar Heels in Chapel Hill and 14 of 15 overall, but their only meeting this season was a 1-0 North Carolina win in extra innings. With a win over St. John’s on Friday, and a North Carolina win over Cornell, the Pirates would get their chance at revenge Saturday, and possibly beyond as the regional plays out.

Kevin Brandt, a senior from Fuquay-Varina and a first-team all-Conference USA selection, was on the mound in Greenville on April 22, 2009, throwing 8 1/3 scoreless innings for the Pirates’ only win over the Tar Heels in the past decade. He’ll start Saturday, potentially against North Carolina, definitely in front of as many East Carolina fans who can squeeze into the stands.

“Getting a chance would be great, but St. John’s is No. 1,” Brandt said Thursday. “That’s who we’re going after right now, and we’ll see what we can do.”

In the consensus opinion of college baseball experts, East Carolina shouldn’t even have been included in the field. The Pirates were one of the final two at-large teams in the field of 64, along with Michigan State, ahead of Wake Forest. Throw in St. John’s and No. 4 seed Cornell, and the Tar Heels have what is perceived as one of the easier regionals of any of the national seeds.

That somewhat underestimates the personal motivation of the Pirates, who have 21 North Carolina players on their roster, all of whom are trying their best not to think about that right now.

“We can’t focus on things that are about to happen,” East Carolina coach Billy Godwin said. “We just have to focus on the task at hand. And right now, that’s St. John’s.”
In their only meeting this season, they took the Tar Heels to extra innings before Chaz Frank’s walk-off single in the bottom of the 10th gave North Carolina a 1-0 win at Boshamer to extend the streak to 14. This year’s scheduled meeting in Greenville, on May 9, was rained out.

The last time the Pirates beat North Carolina, in 2009, their season ended in a super regional in Chapel Hill where the Pirates lost 10-1 and 9-3 to the Tar Heels. Brandt took the loss in the second game. He hasn’t faced North Carolina in the two years and 51 weeks since.

“Gotta win tomorrow first,” said East Carolina right fielder John Wooten, who is from Goldsboro. “We’ll worry about that after tomorrow.”

There’s a large pool of people who don’t think the Pirates should be here. Terry Holland, the ECU athletic director, isn’t one of them. He met with the team Thursday morning to remind them it’s a new season. The Pirates, handed a chance for local vengeance and national vindication, already knew.

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GREENVILLE

Heart institute accredited

The East Carolina Heart Institute at Vidant Medical Center has received full accreditation with percuteous coronary intervention from the Society of Chest Pain Centers.

Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States, with 600,000 people dying annually of heart disease. SCPC's goal is to significantly reduce the mortality rate of these patients by teaching the public to recognize and react to the early symptoms of a possible heart attack, reduce the time that it takes to receive treatment, and increase the accuracy and effectiveness of treatment.

The Accredited Chest Pain Center's protocol-driven approach to patient management allows physicians to reduce time to treatment during the critical early stages of a heart attack, when treatments are most effective.
Editorial: Pirates' postseason possibilities
Friday, June 1, 2012

This was not the season that Head Coach Billy Godwin and the East Carolina University baseball team hoped to experience when play began in early February. The Pirates did not end the year atop the standings nor did it win the Conference USA tournament as a series of missteps and erratic play kept them from fulfilling those goals as the regular season came to an end.

That said, should the Pirates escape Chapel Hill and advance past the Super Regional round to earn a place in the College World Series, this will be the most successful team in school history and one that no East Carolina fan will forget. That will be a tall order, especially with in-state rival North Carolina standing in the way, but these Pirates have the opportunity to shock the college baseball world and that is not their charge.

When it takes the field in Chapel Hill today at 11 a.m. against St. John’s University, the East Carolina baseball team has an opportunity to achieve something never done before by the Pirates. Should the team come through the regional round of the St. John’s Red Storm, the host Tar Heels and Cornell University, and then win the best-of-three series in the Super Regional, it would be the first to win a place in Omaha and play in the College World Series.

That is still a dream, though, and there is much work to do before the Pirates can hope to reach such rarefied air. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that the team received a No. 2 seed in the regional bracket given the way it limped over the finish line this year. The squad dropped four of its last six games and only managed one win in the Conference USA Tournament as it finished with a 35-22-1 record overall.

Still there is confidence that always follows East Carolina onto the field of play and this weekend will be no different. Expect a boisterous and vocal crew of purple-and-gold faithful to be on hand at Boshamer Stadium in Chapel Hill when freshman Jeff Hoffman throws the first pitch this morning. Their support will be matched by those following the games here and throughout the country, wherever Pirate fans may be.

There are no expectations for this East Carolina group and the pressure rests entirely with the home team Tar Heels. The Pirates can make a strong statement should it advance and cement their legacy forever in school lore should they do so.
Five weeks ago, Chaz Frank walked off on East Carolina with a single in the bottom of the tenth inning.

Now the Pirates, who open the Chapel Hill Regional with St. John’s 11 a.m. Friday, are back in town. But the North Carolina baseball team is the last thing on their minds.

In fact, it was almost as if the Pirates were going out of the way not to mention the Tar Heels Thursday after practice.

“We know what to come here and expect, we’re excited to play,” right fielder John Wooten said. “We’re just going to look forward to St. John’s tomorrow and be ready to rock and roll.”

But about the Tar Heels?

“Gotta win tomorrow first,” Wooten said, “we’ll worry about that after tomorrow.”

Left-handed pitcher Kevin Brandt had the same approach.

“Game one’s tomorrow. That’s all we’re worried about – St. John’s,” he said. “Getting a chance would be great, but St. John’s is number one that’s who we’re going after right now.”

For head coach Billy Godwin, who said his team had a strong workout at Boshamer Stadium Thursday afternoon, that’s exactly how he wants his team to respond.

“The way I condition these guys, we can’t plan too far ahead we can only plan one day at a time and control what we do in that day,” Godwin said.

“The good lord gives us the same amount of time in every day – it’s what we choose to do with it. We can’t focus on things that are about to happen we just have to focus on the task at hand and right now that’s St. John’s.”

Whether or not they get another shot at North Carolina, ECU is excited to be back in Chapel Hill. Given their proximity, the Pirates arrived Thursday
instead of trekking in on Wednesday like St. John’s and Cornell. Wooten and Brandt hope that their fans take advantage of the short drive too.

“Our fans are unbelievable,” Wooten said. “I know they’re going to be here in full force and I’m excited to see it and looking forward to it.”

Though the Pirates (35-22-1) saw the Tar Heels just a little more than a month ago, they are familiar with the Red Storm too, as they met last season in the Charlottesville Regional and St. John’s has made the trip down to Greenville in the past.

“They’ve got a great coaching staff and they’re always very athletic,” Godwin said. “They always have great arms and they’re one of the best teams in the Big East. When you put all that together it’s going to be a great challenge for our guys.”
PACIFIC PALISADES, Calif — The East Carolina men’s golf team completed its run at the NCAA Championship on Thursday, shooting a 297 to finish in 26th place out of 30 teams.

The Pirates, who were participating in the tournament for the first time, finished with a 43-over 895 in the 54-hole event at Riviera Country Club.

The top eight teams advanced to match play, which begins today.

Junior Zach Edmondson, sophomore Ryan Eibner and senior David Watkins each shot 2-over for the Pirates during the final round on Thursday.

Edmondson was 5-under through nine holes with three birdies and a hole-in-one on No. 16, the first of his career. He remained under-par through 13 holes before shooting 7-over on the next three holes, but he concluded his round with a birdie.

Edmondson was the Pirates’ best finisher at 9-over.

Conference USA Player of the Year Harold Varner posted an 8-over 79 to finish at 10-over. Varner was 2-over through the first 36 holes of the tourney, but he recorded seven bogeys and one double bogey in the final round.

Rounding out the scoring for ECU were Adam Stephenson (12-over), Eibner (19-over) and Watkins (23-over).

Illinois’ Thomas Pieters took the individual championship. He posted scores of 69, 68 and 71 for a score of 5-under.

—ECU Media Relations
On Campus, New Deals With Banks

By ANDREW MARTIN

College campuses have long been attractive hunting grounds for financial institutions looking for new customers.

In recent years, however, their efforts to woo students have gotten banks and other financial institutions in trouble with regulators. They are now effectively prohibited from providing gifts to students who sign up for credit cards. And the colleges themselves can no longer be paid by the lenders to steer students to student loans.

But many colleges, struggling to offset cuts in state funds and under pressure to keep tuition down, are finding new ways to strike deals with financial institutions, by turning student IDs into debit cards and allowing lenders to take over disbursement of financial aid.

Consumer advocates worry that financial firms are again profiting from unsuspecting students, by charging them fees and even gaining access to their financial aid funds. Now a prominent consumer group has tried to document the extent of the practice.
In a report released on Wednesday, the group, the United States Public Interest Research Group Education Fund, found that nearly 900 colleges and universities have card partnerships with financial institutions; in some instances, the colleges receive hefty payments from banks for the exclusive access to students; in other instances, the schools save money by outsourcing financial functions to banks or other vendors.

The participating schools include many of the nation’s best-known universities and represent two out of every five college students, the report says. The list includes big public universities like the University of Florida and University of Michigan and private schools like the University of Pennsylvania and Northwestern.

Since the financial institution’s logo is often stamped on campus IDs, students may sign up for an account because they believe the university has endorsed the product, the report says. In some instances, students have to open an account if they want to obtain their funds quickly.

“Campus debit cards are wolves in sheep’s clothing,” Rich Williams, higher education advocate for U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund and lead author of the report, said in releasing the report. “Students think they can access their dollars freely, but instead their aid is being eaten up in fees.”

Rohit Chopra, the student loan ombudsman for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, said students need to be aware of options other than the financial institution that has struck a deal with their college.

“Students should know their low-cost options to access their student loans and scholarships,” he said. “Because we hear that many students don’t always know that there are alternatives. And we want that to be clear for them.”

Federal financial aid is sent directly to colleges, which take the payments due and disburse the remainder to students. But now, many colleges have hired outside financial institutions to perform those functions and encourage students to keep their money with those institutions. As a result, banks and financial firms have “an unprecedented opportunity to market add-on products — bank accounts, A.T.M./debit cards and even loans and credit cards — to students with virtually no competition,” the report said. Students may also be charged automated teller machine fees to access their financial aid funds.
The biggest player in the field is Higher One, which was started by three Yale undergraduates in 2000 and now has contracts with 520 college campuses, the report says. The company’s fees have prompted complaints at Western Washington University and a handful of other campuses.

But Miles Lasater, one of the co-founders, said his company has provided a valuable service for colleges and universities and a good deal for students. Student accounts are meant to be free, he said, and students are charged only for optional services.

For instance, account holders are charged $29 for overdrawning their account once and $38 for subsequent overdrafts, 50 cents for making a debit transaction using a personal identification number, and $2.50 for using a non-Higher One A.T.M.

“I think the important thing is to compare it to the alternative,” he said. “The alternative for students isn’t somehow magically nothing.”

The report highlighted a deal between Ohio State University and Huntington Bank, which pays the university $25 million in exchange for allowing it to open branches and A.T.M.’s on campus and “exclusive access to directly offer tailored products and services to more than 600,000 students, faculty, staff and alumni,” according to the university. Ohio State has called the partnership an innovative way to raise new revenue, since the state’s contribution to the university budget has sharply declined.

“It is important to note that it does not include marketing loans and credit cards to students,” said a university spokeswoman Shelly Hoffman. “Great care was given to make sure protections for students were built into this agreement.”

Mr. Williams, the report’s author, said some of the deals may, in fact, be good for universities and students but too many lack transparency. The group released a similar report several years ago about credit card marketing on campus, before Congress curbed many of the worst abuses.

Many of the same tactics are now being used by financial institutions to peddle debit cards: using university logos to market products, setting up tables at orientation, even giving free sweatshirts for students who sign up.

“It’s almost the same exact tricks — but it’s totally legal,” he said.