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ECU rallies past Gamecocks

Harris helps Pirates advance to UNC

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Monday, June 01, 2009

A baseball team that hasn't run out of surprises all season played the hand Monday night that trumped them all.

East Carolina first battled back from a 6-0 deficit, something the Pirates have done many times already in 2009. But then they turned their home crowd on its ear by tying South Carolina in the bottom of the ninth, 9-9, and upending the Gamecocks in the 10th, 10-9, to win the NCAA Greenville Regional.

The Pirates (46-18) earned their way into the Chapel Hill Super Regional this weekend against North Carolina, and to get there, they beat the same Gamecocks club which swept the Pirates in their last Super Regional appearance in 2004.

The series begins Saturday at noon.

"We played five games in three days, and to come back and win three in a row was absolutely outstanding," said ECU head coach Billy Godwin, whose club finished 4-1 in the tournament, beating Binghamton and South Carolina two times apiece.

Devin Harris smashed a three-run home run in the bottom of the ninth to tie the game, and then sent Clark-LeClair Stadium into hysterics with a 10th-inning single that brought Kyle Roller sliding safely into home plate for the win.

Harris ended the game with five critical runs batted in on four hits.

"I've hit a few home runs, but I'd say by far that was the biggest I've ever hit," said Harris, who jumped on a slider for his 14th homer of the season. "The first pitch, I got a fastball, and it wasn't a great pitch to hit, and I kind of anticipated that he was going to come off-speed, and he hung the slider a little bit."

Using an assortment of pitchers in attempt to stay in the game, ECU's frantic rally was made possible by the calm pitching of Bailey Daniels, Seth Simmons and freshman Mike Wright, who got his first collegiate victory in one of ECU's biggest wins.

Godwin admitted Wright was a pleasant surprise.

"If you had told me that Mike Wright was going to be on the mound in front of 5,000 screaming Pirate fans with the opportunity to advance, I probably wouldn't have taken that bet," Godwin said. "But we prepared him all year for that opportunity, and when we got a little depleted, a little down, he stepped up."

Like ECU, South Carolina (40-23) sent five arms to the mound, and although it was usual starter Sam Dyson who coughed up Harris' winning single in the 10th, Curtis Johnson was pinnned with the loss.

"I think the further we got into their bullpen, the more confident we got," senior first baseman Brandon Henderson said. "We thought if we could just keep chipping away and scoring a few runs here and there and get closer, we would be all right. For Devin to come up and hit that three-run home run in the bottom of the ninth to tie it up, it was by far the greatest moment of my college career."

Trailing since the second inning, ECU personified much of its own regular season, ramming home three runs in the bottom of the ninth inning on Harris' clutch home run to tie the score at 9-9 and get the crowd of 5,047
inside Clark-LeClair jumping.

After reliever Alex Farotto walked Henderson to lead off the ECU ninth, the Gamecocks brought Johnson to the hill, and he lost Dustin Harrington to a base on balls after working a full count. Then Harris brought the house down, unloading on an 0-1 pitch and rocketing the ball well out of the park past the left field wall.

The Pirates' top five hitters managed just two hits off Gamecock right-hander Jay Brown during the starter's 42/3 innings of work, but the first was a big one. Trailing 6-0 in the fifth, leadoff man Trent Whitehead drew a walk with one out, and Ryan Wood worked a 2-2 count against Brown before drilling a two-run home run to left to trim the lead to four runs, 6-2.

From there, ECU employed a familiar formula, steadily eroding the Gamecock lead one inning at a time.

Though the Gamecocks loaded the bases in the sixth and got a seeming insurance run on Justin Dalles' second base hit of the game, stretching the lead back to five at 7-2, the Pirates' two-run fifth gave rise to a two-run sixth and a two-run seventh, pulling ECU to within a run, 7-6, heading into the eighth.

In the bottom of the sixth with one out, Harris singled. Drew Schieber walked and Jared Avchen roped a double into the right-center field gap, scoring Harris. Schieber then came home on Trent Whitehead's sacrifice fly to center field to cut the lead to 7-4.

In the seventh, Dustin Harrington flared an RBI single over second to make it 7-5, and Harris followed with a base hit to left to make it 7-6.

While the Pirates rallied, they also found stability in their fourth pitcher of the night. Simmons took the hill with one out in the sixth and threw 31/3 innings, and South Carolina skipper Ray Tanner said Simmons was one of the keys to the game.

"Simmons kept us in check," Tanner said. "He gave up the two-run homer, but he kept us in check and we weren't able to finish it off. They're a great club."

But South Carolina found success against Simmons, too, as Jackie Bradley Jr. smashed a two-run blast to right to make it 9-6 South Carolina in the eighth.

The Gamecocks took a 1-0 lead in the second inning, then hammered their way into the Pirate bullpen with a suffocating five-run third.

The flurry chased ECU starter Patrick Somers in lieu of usual Friday starter Chris Heston. By inning's end, both had been charged with three runs and South Carolina held a commanding 6-0 lead.

Parker Bangs got things started with an RBI single to left field off Heston, which scored Nick Ebert after his one-out walk and a base hit off the bat of Dalles chased Somers.

Andrew Crisp made it 3-0 with his sacrifice fly. Bobby Haney floated an RBI single to left-center to make it 4-0 and No. 9 hitter Scott Wingo capped the inning by fighting off an inside pitch which stayed aloft and sailed out of the park for a two-run homer and a commanding lead for the visitors.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@coxnc.com or (252)329-9595.

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Dr. Robert B. Gantt

Dr. Gantt, 79, of Charlotte died peacefully on Saturday, May 30, 2009, at Carolinas Medical Center of complications related to Multiple Myeloma. Born April 25, 1930, in Albemarle, NC, to the late Boyd and Zula Lisk Gant, he was a professor, star athlete, husband and father. Dr. Gant is survived by his devoted wife of 52 years, Christine Williamson Gant, who cared for Bob during his illness. He is also survived by a sister, Bettie Gant Jordan and her husband, Richard of Salisbury; his daughters, Lynn Gant Davis and husband, Scott of Charlotte, Janet Gant Locke and husband Ed of Charlotte; a son, Robert Baxter Gantt, Jr. and his wife, Joanne of Durham, NC; five grandchildren, Robert Davis, Sarah Davis, Liz Locke, Paige Locke and Tommy Locke, all of Charlotte; numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Bob was selected to the Stanly County Sports Hall of Fame in 2008. Bob started his football career playing wingback, fullback and linebacker for Albemarle High School, where he was selected All-State and played in the 1947 Shrine Bowl Game. He was nicknamed “Goo-Goo” at AHS, a nickname he carried with him as he starred on the gridiron for the University of North Carolina Tarheels from 1948-1951. During his playing years, the Carolina Tarheels consistently ranked in the Top Ten and played in several bowl games, including the Cotton Bowl. Bob was selected by his teammates as a captain in his senior year. Following graduation, Dr. Gant served in the United States Marine Corps, earning the rank of Captain. He left the service to earn his Masters Degree from UNC and then returned to Albemarle High School’s staff. There he coached football, wrestling and track; started golf and tennis programs; and ultimately served as AHS Athletic Director. In 1962, Bob moved to Greenville, NC to join the football coaching staff at East Carolina University, serving alternately as offensive and defensive coordinator under Clarence Stasavich. During his eight years on the coaching staff at ECU, the team won several conference championships and numerous bowl games. He also coached ECU wrestling for four years. Dr. Gantt’s education included earning his BA and Masters Degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill and his PHD from Louisiana State University. After coaching, he taught on the faculty at East Carolina University, where he retired as Chairman of the Health and Physical Education Department in 1993. Dr. Gant served as junior warden at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Greenville, NC. Following his 1994 move to Charlotte, he was a faithful member of St John’s Episcopal Church in Charlotte. During retirement, Bob and Christine were avid golfers at Raintree Country Club in Charlotte. Visitation will be held Tuesday, June 2, from 6-8 pm at J. B. Talent Funeral Service, 1937 Sharon Arny Rd. Charlotte, NC. A memorial service will be held 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 3, 2009 at St. John’s Episcopal Church, Carmel Rd, in Charlotte, with the Reverend Tim Clayton officiating. Entombment will follow at Sharon Memorial Park Mausoleum. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society, South Atlantic Division, Mecklenburg Community, PO Box 41912, Raleigh, NC 27699-1912, or to the charity of your choice. www.talentfuneralservice.com

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NCSU, Easley silent on future
A prime piece of her job is on hold; her pay isn't

BY JAY PRICE, Staff Writer

University leaders said Mary Easley should quit her $170,000-a-year-job at N.C. State.

Easley's lawyer, with the former state first lady silent by his side, said she wouldn't.

Now, a week later, she's still employed at NCSU despite a cost-cutting move the university announced Thursday that halted a project that was supposed to be more than one-third of her job.

Neither side is talking, so it's unclear whether there's a standoff, whether settlement negotiations are under way over the remaining four years of her contract, or whether the university is planning to fire her or reduce her pay to match her lighter workload.

The attorney that Easley has hired to handle her job-related problems, Marvin Schiller of Raleigh, said Monday that it's his policy not to discuss negotiations or even confirm them. "I wouldn't indicate something like that one way or the other," he said.

University officials, meanwhile, can't discuss any plans they may have regarding her job because it's a personnel matter protected under privacy law, said Keith Nichols, a university spokesman.

A settlement deal over a contract like Easley's would have to be approved by the university's top academic officer, the provost, Nichols said.

The former provost, Larry Nielsen, hired Easley. Nielsen resigned in May, citing stress caused by the uproar over her job. He was replaced by an interim provost, Dr. Warwick Arden, dean of NCSU's veterinary college.

Easley was hired in 2005 to teach and to run a major campus speakers series, the Millennium Seminars. Last summer, she was given a new five-year contract, an 88 percent raise and additional responsibilities, though her teaching load was cut.

The promotion led to more scrutiny over how she was hired. Last month, after News & Observer stories detailing his ties to the Easley family, McQueen Campbell, then-chairman of the NCSU board of trustees, admitted to UNC system President Erskine Bowles that he had told the university's chancellor that Mary Easley was looking for a job.

Bowles asked Campbell to resign, which he did with just weeks remaining in his term.

Bowles, NCSU Chancellor James L. Oblinger and Bob Jordan, the trustees chairman elected to replace Campbell, all have called for Easley to resign, too.

Schiller countered their criticism by releasing glowing reports about Easley's job performance written by Bowles and Nielsen.

According to university documents, about 35 percent of Easley's job is supposed to be
creating and running a new academic center to study public safety leadership and to provide outreach to first responders such as police officers and firefighters.

There are more than 60 such centers and institutes at NCSU. These typically focus on a specific topic but, unlike more traditional academic units, don’t grant degrees. They typically are expected to seek major outside grants but can also draw on university resources, such as staff and office and classroom space.

Last week, as they told deans and department heads to start planning for a double-digit budget cut from the legislature, university leaders announced a moratorium on the creation of new centers.

UNC system officials had asked the universities specifically to look at academic centers as they ponder what to cut. Those at NCSU had been under review for months .Some older centers will be eliminated or merged, and at least one other planned center was affected by the moratorium.

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UNC protesters reject plea deals

Activists arrested at immigration speeches will appear in court in September

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO, Staff writer

CHAPEL HILL - Charges against seven campus protesters will be heard in September after one had her case continued and the others rejected plea agreements Monday.

Haley Koch, a Morehead-Cain scholar at UNC-Chapel Hill, faces a charge of disturbing the peace at a protest against former Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo's speech April 14.

She and another student held a banner in front of Riley Matheson, president of the campus chapter of Youth for Western Civilization, as he introduced Tancredo, a staunch opponent of mass immigration.

Her case and those of six other protesters in a second campus incident now will be heard Sept. 14.

The other defendants protested at an April 22 speech by former U.S. Rep. Virgil Goode of Virginia, who also favors stricter immigration policies.

Assistant District Attorney Jeff Nieman offered to dismiss the charges of five of the six Goode defendants after six months if they stayed off the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, committed no other crimes, performed 24 hours of community service and paid a $200 community service fee.

That "deferred prosecution" arrangement would have required them to admit guilt, which the protesters rejected.

"A lot of the defendants feel that they're not guilty, and so taking a plea would be dishonest," said Michael Bandes, 25, who spoke on behalf of the group.

Bandes had a prior criminal record and was offered a plea agreement that would have required him paying a $100 fine plus court costs. He rejected that.

"It's important not to just let the university get this over with quickly and win," said Bandes. "Just because you own this town doesn't mean you can just do whatever you want here.

"They're allowing a white supremacist group in our community, and we're just supposed to sit down and take it," he said.

Koch said UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp called her last week, urging her to take the deferred prosecution, but she's not interested.

"I feel really strongly that the charges should be dismissed," she said.

Koch spoke at a rally in front of the courthouse after Monday's hearing. So did her father, award-winning filmmaker Chris Koch, who has observed peaceful anti-war and pro-civil rights
demonstrations over the years.

"There is an honored tradition of that in America," he said. "That's the only way progress has been made. ... I guess I'm partly responsible for Haley being here."

Koch's mother, Susan, was also there, along with family friend Hodding Carter, who was White House press secretary under President Jimmy Carter and now teaches at UNC-CH.

"She was raised in a home where hate dialogue wasn't allowable," said Susan Koch. "When someone else speaks it in your presence, then you have to speak up."

The UNC Protestors Defense Committee, which organized the rally, called on Thorp to dissolve Youth for Western Civilization. Haley Koch said allowing speech against immigrants would fuel donations and membership for more violent groups.

"A culture of hate breeds a culture of violence," she said. "This isn't about people just saying things. This is about people who hope to perpetrate violence."

The protesters pointed to YWC co-founder Marcus Epstein, who pleaded guilty last week in Washington, D.C., to a charge of simple assault. Prosecutors say he struck an African-American woman while uttering a racial epithet. They called the incident a hate crime.

YWC leaders maintain they're not racist and have pointed to Epstein, who is ethnically Jewish and Korean, as evidence.

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