THE DAILY CLIPS

June 3, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Friendship provides most valuable assist for player

By Tony Castleberry
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, June 03, 2009

Brock Young's job during practices and games is to help his East Carolina teammates get good shots.

The team's success often depends on Young, the Pirates' point guard, committing one unselfish act after another, and thus far during his collegiate career, Young has proven himself willing and able to put others' needs before his own with a basketball in his hand.

But the 21-year-old Raleigh native may never provide a teammate with an assist as important as the help he gave to a dying boy during the final months of his life.

Making a connection

Young met Aaron Thomas when Aaron's kindergarten teacher, Bebie Barrett, brought Thomas to an ECU home game last December, just days after Aaron's sixth birthday on Dec. 3. A rare form of lung cancer he'd been battling for months was taking its toll on Aaron's little body by then, and even though doctors told Aaron's mother, Angela Thomas, in November that there wasn't much they could do for him, Aaron still tried to get every bit of joy out of life that he could.

"He was a very positive child," said Barrett, who moved to Greenville from Raleigh in 2004 and took a job at Wahl-Coates Elementary School. "There were days he came to school and didn't feel good, but he was there.

"He was a very bright child. The lady that did homebound (schooling) with him has taught kindergarten for many years and she said that she had never worked with a child that young who was that bright. That's the frustrating side of things."

Barrett has known Young since he was in second grade when Young's mother, Virginia, was Barrett's teacher's assistant in Raleigh. Thinking that having a chance to meet Young might take Aaron's mind off his cancer for a little while, Barrett introduced the ECU hoops star to the kindergartner.

Young and Aaron began their friendship at that December game in Minges Coliseum. They remained close for the rest of Aaron's life.

Judging from the way the college kid and the kindergartner connected, they each seemed to know their time together would be short.

Brief remission

Aaron was healthy enough to attend Wahl-Coates from August until the week before Thanksgiving.

But it wasn't long before the cancer came back stronger than ever, and by late March, the kid nicknamed "Mookie" was spending every day and night in Pitt County Memorial Hospital. The needles and oxygen masks and beeping machinery are enough to frighten adults.

Aaron probably felt those fears, but he was a trooper through it all, and Young's visits to PCMH helped lift his spirits.

"He was always excited to see (Young)," Angela Thomas said. "Brock would read books to him or bring him little toys and stuff. Just talking to Brock, it was like (Aaron) wasn't paying attention to being sick."

Young started showing up at PCMH regularly, and his friendship with Aaron grew with each visit.
Aaron took every opportunity he could to have his picture taken with Young and the basketball-playing friends he'd sometimes have in tow. Young and his teammates would sign every poster and basketball Aaron presented them, and the youngster relished every chance, however rare, to make it out to Minges and watch his hometown heroes play.

While all the Pirates embraced Aaron, Young was clearly the boy's favorite player.

"To Aaron, Brock was the end-all, be-all," Barrett said.

But even though Young was a star in Aaron's eyes, the college kid who's arguably the best player on his team didn't act like it around his kindergarten fan. Young's trips to the hospital were always all about Aaron.

"(Brock) went once with me (to PCMH)." Barrett said. "Every time after that, he went on his own. He would go and just sit with Aaron. If Aaron didn't feel good, Brock would just sit there and hold his hand.

"He was comfortable enough, with a very sick child, to go on his own, which is so impressive to me."

Young's frequent visits surprised, and delighted, Aaron's mother, who rarely left her son's bedside.

"I'd be sitting there and all of a sudden, up popped Brock," Angela Thomas said. "He'd stay for an hour, two hours. For a young college student, but also a basketball player on top of that, to spend time with my baby made me feel good."

Final days

Despite having a daily routine filled with classes, study hall, practice, games, travel to away games, media responsibilities and all the other things that take up a college basketball player's time, Young kept Aaron near the top of his priority list, even after Aaron got really sick.

In fact, if Young had been in Greenville during Aaron's final days, the college kid's face would probably have been one of the last ones the kindergartner ever saw.

As it turns out, Young's voice was one of the last ones Aaron heard.

"I was back and forth from the hospital, but I had gone out of town, and I talked to him (on the phone) the night before he passed," Young said. "I said, 'I'm coming to see you tomorrow when I get a chance.' Then Mrs. Barrett called me the next morning and said he had passed away."

Aaron drew his final breath on April 22. While he didn't get a chance to hold Aaron's hand one last time before he died, Young did return to Greenville in time to pay his respects at the funeral service.

The connection he made with Aaron and Aaron's death even caused Young to approach his life with renewed zest.

"It just helped me understand that you're not promised tomorrow, so live it to the fullest," he said.

For a 21-year-old to devote so much time to a sick little boy seems like an all too rare occurrence these days. For the face of the local college's basketball team to do so is even more unlikely.

But Young doesn't seem to think his relationship with Aaron should be treated as anything out of the ordinary.

"It's just something that's been in me because I've had the opportunity to grow up with people around me helping me throughout my life," Young said. "So, I just give it back, what I've learned."

It may turn out to be the most valuable assist of Young's life.

Contact Tony Castleberry at tcastleberry@coxn.com or (252) 329-9591.

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
Enrollment at private schools is on the rise

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, June 02, 2009

A national recession hasn't been enough to slow the enrollment of private schools in the state.

North Carolina had a record 98,545 elementary, middle and high school students enrolled in private schools this year, according to statistics released Monday by the N.C. Division of Non-Public Education. The latest figures show an increase of nearly 1,000 students from the 2007-08 school year despite poor economic conditions.

The statistics do not include numbers for students attending home schools, which the latest state records show grew even faster between 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Private school enrollment in Pitt County this year was consistent with the rest of the state, increasing by four students to 1,892 — 10th most in the state. There are 12 private schools in the county.

Leaders of those schools say the poor economy prompted them to prepare for the worst during budget discussions, but it has had little effect on their institutions.

"For the first time as a school, we were looking at five different options for our budget because we were just unclear about what was going to happen to our economy and how that would impact us," Rob Peterson, head of The Oakwood School, said. "We have been pleasantly surprised that Greenville has weathered it better than a lot of areas."

Peterson said Oakwood officials projected an enrollment of about 300 students this year, but the school opened the school year with 333. By the end of the year, there were 342 students enrolled.

"We saw a tremendous surge even as the beginning stages of the recession were starting to take hold," Peterson said.

Peterson said he believes East Carolina University and the medical community have played a significant role in local enrollment growth. He said some families are moving from other areas and wanting to continue private schooling. Others choose it because they are "leery" of the concerns of public schools such as the budget cuts that are being proposed.

Peterson noted that Oakwood has seen a slight increase in requests for financial assistance, but he thinks many families are cutting back on vacations or other expenditures in order to meet tuition requirements.

"People are willing to sacrifice for their children," Peterson said.

State figures show that 71 percent of the 683 North Carolina private schools are registered as being religious.

One of them, St. Peter's Catholic School in Greenville, continues to have long waiting lists, according to Director of Admissions Laurel Walsh. There are 572 students enrolled at the pre-K-8 school.

Walsh said families seeking enrollment commonly express concerns about the quality of education and safety in public schools. Many families also say they want their children at a school where students pray together.

"I really thought that the number of applicants would go down with the economy, but we haven't seen it," Walsh said. "It is really surprising."
Mecklenburg County has the most private school students of any county in the state with 19,733, up from 19,502 the previous year. Wake County had the second-highest total of any county with 15,123, an increase of 427 students.

The number of private school students still represents a small fraction of the 1.4 million public school students in North Carolina, including 23,235 in Pitt County.

Contact Brock Letchworth at bletcher@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9574.
ECU's Devin Harris connects on the winning hit Monday night in the 10th inning against South Carolina as the Pirates battle back to win regional title.

TRAVIS LONG, Staff photo by Travis Long

Alex White says UNC pitchers must be aggressive when taking on ECU batters in the super regional.

Robert Willett, Staff Photo by Robert Willett
UNC wary of ECU bats

The Tar Heels expect the Pirates' power and deep lineup to test UNC's pitching staff in this weekend's super regional at Boshamer Stadium.

BY KEN TYSIAC, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL - East Carolina has the attention of North Carolina's players, and not just because the teams split two games during the regular season.

As they prepare for the NCAA baseball super regional that will start at noon Saturday in Chapel Hill, North Carolina's players are raving about the way East Carolina's players swing the bats.

The Pirates have 107 home runs and a .341 team batting average. North Carolina has been less productive at the plate with 65 homer runs and a .307 mark but has a sparkling 3.66 team earned run average.

Six East Carolina players have at least 12 home runs.

"I know a bunch of guys in their lineup can swing it," North Carolina first baseman Dustin Ackley said during Tuesday's media interview session at Boshamer Stadium. "They've got guys with power. I don't even know if they've got a guy batting below .300 in their lineup. So it's definitely going to be a test for our pitchers. They've got power, and home runs definitely can be hit here."

North Carolina's players said pitching well against East Carolina (46-18) will be the key to the series, from which the winner will advance to the College World Series.

The Tar Heels (45-16), the No. 4 national seed, will start junior right-hander Alex White in the opening game despite his recent struggles.

White (7-4) is expected to be an early first-round pick in next week's major league draft, but he has lost his past three decisions. He started Saturday's 14-5 regional win over Coastal Carolina but did not get a decision after giving up five runs in 42/3 innings.

He was battling a hamstring problem and a blister on the first finger of his right (pitching) hand against Coastal Carolina. But coach Mike Fox said he expects White to be fine this weekend.

During media interviews Tuesday afternoon, White had an adhesive bandage taped over the top of the finger.

"It's getting better," White said. "As long as it heals the way it should, it should have no effect on anything this weekend. It's just a simple blister in the wrong spot."

The Tar Heels will pitch right-hander Adam Warren (8-2) on Sunday. If necessary, right-hander Matt Harvey (7-2) would pitch a deciding game in the best-of-three series Monday.

White said North Carolina's pitching staff needs to be aggressive with the East Carolina
hitters.

"We'll pitch off our fastballs, let them know that we'll come in at any time," White said. "We've seen them quite a few times. They've got a lot of good hitters, and it's going to be tough for us."

White, who is from Greenville, is looking forward to the meeting with his hometown school. He said Greenville is a "baseball town" with great fans who should occupy plenty of seats even on the Tar Heels' home field.

Ackley said he is looking forward to the atmosphere the Pirates fans will bring with them.

"It's something different that we don't experience here," Ackley said. "We don't have the kind of fans like that, that yell a lot. We've just kind of got the low-key fans. That will kind of add a little mixture to the whole thing."

Between the fans' voices and the Pirates' bats, North Carolina's players said they have plenty of challenges ahead as the Tar Heels try to advance to the College World Series for the fourth straight year.

ktysiac@charlotteobserver.com or 919-829-8942

Read The News & Observer print edition on your computer with the new e-edition!

Related Content

- Photo galleries: UNC and ECU's regional games

© Copyright 2009, The News & Observer Publishing Company

A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Gamecocks give credit to East Carolina's home crowd

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, June 02, 2009

A historic win for the East Carolina baseball team Monday night happened under perfect circumstances, both for the baseball program and the university as a whole.

Both were able to cash in on the hopes that came to town with a new stadium, and one bearing a familiar name.

The Pirates’ 10th-inning triumph over South Carolina in the NCAA Greenville Regional capped a long-anticipated weekend at the university, as ECU baseball had been hoping to host an NCAA regional at Clark-LeClair Stadium since the ballpark’s inception in 2005.

It seemed indisputable that if ECU could play host, the environment surrounding the stadium would take care of the rest. And if there were any skeptics about the intensity of the fans or the electricity inside the stadium, an outsider’s perspective said it all.

Gamecock outfielder DeAngelo Mack was in the face of the ECU fans three times last weekend, and he didn’t hesitate to say it felt like the Pirates had a 10th teammate outside of the playing field all weekend.

“(Playing at home) means a lot because you’ve got your own fans behind you, and you don’t have people heckling you the whole time, but either way, you’ve got to step out and play, you’ve got to compete,” said Mack, who had a pair of base hits in the regional championship game and three doubles during the tournament. “ECU, they came out and played so I guess you’ve got to tip your hat to them.”

Bringing the bats

Gamecock head coach Ray Tanner has been around long enough to know the only safe lead in college baseball is the one the winning team has when the game is over.

Until then, everything is up to question, and Monday night was no exception, as ECU clawed back from deficits of 6-0, 7-2 and 9-6 to win the Greenville Regional, 10-9.

“You’ve got to score a bunch, and we scored some, but not enough,” Tanner said. “(The Pirates) don’t swing at a lot of bad pitches. They’re all tough outs. They’ve been doing it all year, and they finished first in a great conference.”

Even when they had jumped out to their early six-run edge, South Carolina’s players said the pressure was still on to keep adding to that lead.

Center fielder Whit Merrifield seemed to know after the game that often three separate leads and nine total runs aren’t enough. After the Pirates had cut the Gamecock lead to 7-6, Jackie Bradley Jr. launched a two-run home run to make it 9-6, and still it wasn’t enough to fend off the Pirates, who got a ninth-inning, three-run homer off the bat of Devin Harris, and then a game-winning single from Harris in the 10th.

“It was definitely some good insurance, but the way these guys swing the bat, they’re always in the game,” said Merrifield, who went 4-for-6 and scored two runs in the championship game loss.

Mack, whose team had routed ECU 12-2 Saturday night to deal the Pirates their first and only loss of the regional, agreed.
“There’s no comfort, especially with a team like this,” Mack said. “They swing the bats really well.”

Ironically, Mack and his teammates might have had the final score, 10-9, almost pegged if they’d been asked to guess it beforehand.

They likely would have picked a different winner, however.

“We came in with the mentality that we needed to score maybe 10 runs to win the game, especially with the way these guys swing,” Mack said.

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

Copyright 2009 The Daily Reflector All rights reserved. - -
4-year colleges graduate 53% in 6 years
By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

Even as colleges nationwide celebrate commencement season, hundreds of schools are failing to graduate a majority of their students in six years, a report says today.

Nationally, four-year colleges graduated an average of just 53% of entering students within six years, and "rates below 50%, 40% and even 30% are distressingly easy to find," says the report by the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank. It's based on data reported to the Education Department by nearly 1,400 schools about full-time first-time students who entered in fall 2001.

CHART: How states, schools stack up on graduation rates

Some findings aren't surprising. Harvard University boasts one of the highest rates, 97%. Southern University at New Orleans, which faced upheaval in 2005 with Hurricane Katrina, reported 8%.

Even so, the report documents a "dramatic variation" even across institutions with comparable admissions standards, which suggests some schools are more effective in educating similar students.

"While student motivation, finances and ability matter greatly when it comes to college completion, the practices of higher education institutions matter, too," says lead author Frederick Hess. When similar colleges have a large gap in graduation rates, "it is fair to ask why," the report says.

Education leaders said the report could be useful. "We can learn from universities who are beating the odds," says Geri Malandra of the American Council on Education.

Examples from the study, which grouped schools by categories in Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges:

• Among schools that require only a high school diploma for admission, Heritage University and Walla Walla University, both in Washington state, reported graduation rates of 53% and 17%, respectively.

• Among colleges that require high school grades averaging a B-minus or better, John Carroll University in Cleveland and Chicago State University in Illinois graduated 74% vs. 16%, respectively.

• In the "most competitive" group, Amherst College in Massachusetts and Reed College in Portland, Ore., graduated 96% vs. 76%, respectively.

The data have limits: They don't account for students who transfer, for example. And they should not be used as a sole measure of quality, the report says, because "schools should not be unfairly penalized for maintaining high standards."

But as graduation rates grow increasingly central to discussions about accountability, co-author Mark Schneider says, families ought to be thinking that way, too. "We are emphasizing transparency" and urging students to factor graduation rates into decision-making, he says. "It's one of these little secrets that everybody in the industry knows. We're just trying to highlight it."

# # #
More students opting for gap years

There was a time when taking a year off after high school to find yourself was frowned upon.

But taking a "gap year" has become a growing trend in recent years for academically motivated students before going to college.

Sixteen UNC students took gap years during the 2005-06 school year, and 30 students took gap years during 2006-07.

Gap-year experiences have ranged from working on a political campaign in Washington, D.C., to studying art in Italy, said Barbara Polk, senior associate director of undergraduate admissions.

But the experience must be something that the student cannot get at UNC. If gap year students enroll in another university, their acceptance to UNC is revoked.

"A lot of students have a unique opportunity," Polk said. "They see this long road ahead of them, and they want to take a break. They feel like they can focus better if they take a year off."

And Morehead-Cain Foundation scholars are particularly pushed to take a gap year after high school.

"Students that do gap years are better prepared for the future and come in with more maturity," said Charles Lovelace, executive director of the foundation. "They have a better perspective of what they hope to accomplish."

Six of the 25 students taking gap years during the 2007-08 school year are Morehead-Cain Scholars.

Haley Koch is a sophomore Morehead-Cain scholar. Although she graduated from high school in 2005, Koch said she is not ashamed of being old for her class.

Koch planned her own experience abroad, combining service and travel. She lived in 25 countries in Africa and the Middle East between July 2005 and August 2006.

"I expected that my gap year would give me the chance to engage with the world in a different way," she said.

She had the opportunity to teach music in a refugee camp in Palestine, sing in the Xhosa language with orphans in South Africa and debate with Israeli soldiers who held automatic rifles on their laps.

"I found that I could ... see the similarities, the generosity and the hope people had," Koch said.

Although the Morehead-Cain Foundation did not help with Koch's traveling expenses, the foundation began partially funding gap year travels in 2006 with a maximum of $7,500 for each scholar.

To get permission for a gap year, students must pay the $100 enrollment deposit and submit a written request to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions stating why they want to defer their entrance to the University.

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.
Shaw leader has rich history

BY JOSH SHAFFER, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Shaw University's first female president, Dorothy Cowser Yancy, brings a knack for raising money to a historically black school that is drowning in more than $20 million of debt.

In 14 years at the helm of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, Yancy raised more than $145 million and boosted the school's endowment from $14 million to $53 million -- a feat Shaw officials hope she can repeat in Raleigh.

Yancy was introduced Tuesday as Shaw's interim president, though university leaders say they hope she'll keep the job permanently.

Board members noted that Yancy once issued laptop computers to every student at Johnson C. Smith and that she rescued the university from the same shaky state that now vexes Shaw.

"As they used to say when I was growing up," Board Chairman Willie Gary said, "she brought them from the projects to the pros."

Yancy replaces Clarence Newsome, who took a one-year leave of absence in mid-May amid rising concerns about Shaw's ballooning debt, decaying dormitories, payment of everyday expenses on credit and a graduation rate that hovers around 36 percent.

Newsome has not returned repeated calls.

Conditions at the private school so disturbed alumni that in March the Greensboro chapter stopped donating or raising money for its alma mater. This stance stayed in place until mid-May, when Shaw announced that Newsome would leave his post with a paid, one-year sabbatical. At that time, the agency that accredited Shaw in 2002 said it would demand a plan for paying down the debt once a new president replaces Newsome.
Yancy, 65, steps out of a year's retirement to right the school's finances and its infrastructure, a task she promised to tackle with vigor.

Good at raising money

"I'm just a country girl from Alabama," said Yancy, who holds a bachelor's degree in history and social science from Johnson C. Smith, along with advanced degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Atlanta University in Georgia. "I grew up on a farm, and we have our work cut out for us. The only way you have flowers is to pull weeds and to till soil."

Basketball fans in the Triangle will feel a bit of a sting from Yancy's arrival. In 2006, she was widely credited with luring the CIAA Tournament to Charlotte, pulling thousands of fans and their money from Raleigh. She had lobbied for the move for more than a decade.

But her fundraising record brings Yancy the most attention.

In 1996, Johnson C. Smith won $750,000, one of six "genius grants" the MacArthur Foundation gave to liberal arts schools. Johnson C. Smith also topped its goals set in two capital campaigns, most recently passing the $75 million mark by $5.7 million.

"She's probably one of the more effective fundraisers I've ever encountered," Patty Norman, former chairwoman of the university's board of visitors, told The Charlotte Observer in 2007. "Aside from her incredible passion for the school, she's willing to go after and ask anyone for help. A lot of people are good at fundraising but don't really enjoy it. You could tell she really enjoyed it."

Founded in 1865, Shaw is the largest historically black university in the South, and it played a prominent role in the civil rights movement. Gary, now a multimillionaire lawyer in Florida, often speaks of arriving at Shaw with just a suitcase held together with rope, told by other institutions that he was not college material.

What Shaw needs

About 200 people cheered when Yancy appeared Tuesday on the steps of Estey Hall, applauding especially loud when Gary began with "We've chosen a lady that. . . ."

"Excellent, excellent, excellent," said Julius Cromwell, an alumnus from the class of 1958. "What we need at Shaw is somebody who can handle our financial situation, and she has a history of doing that. Plus, she's a people person."

Staff researcher Brooke Cain contributed to this report.

josh.shaffer@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4818

Read The News & Observer print edition on your computer with the new e-edition!

**Dorothy Cowser Yancy**

Age: 65

Education: Bachelor's degree in history and social science from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte; master's degree in history from University of Massachusetts at Amherst; doctorate in political science from Atlanta University in Georgia

Previous occupation: President of Johnson C. Smith University, retired in 2008

Quote: "We're going to survive, and we're going to come out stronger. I believe in HBCUs. I believe they should exist."