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ECU's Bowden cleared of charges
By Tony Castleberry
Friday, June 8, 2012

Shamarr Bowden kept his cool when members of the U.S. Marshal’s Office arrested him on April 30 for something he didn’t do. Staying true to his nature, he didn’t overreact when the truth came to light either.

Bowden, a rising senior on the East Carolina men’s basketball team, had felony weapons charges against him dropped last week and upon hearing the news — while on his way to pick up some steaks at Harris Teeter — Bowden calmly processed the information in much the same way he did the day of his arrest.

“My mom called me and let me know that the letter had been sent to my house and that the charges had been officially dismissed by the grand jury,” Bowden said during an interview in ECU coach Jeff Lebo’s office on Thursday. “I paused for a while. I just sat and thought. Then I texted coach and said, ‘It’s over. The grand jury dismissed it.’ It took me like five minutes. I just sat there and didn’t really say much.”

Bowden was charged with possession of a loaded weapon and prohibited use of a firearm after an incident in Rochester, N.Y. The 6-foot-4 Greensboro native was accused of firing a gun in the air at a party on Easter weekend, but throughout the ordeal, Bowden told everyone who would listen that he wasn’t guilty.

As stunned as Bowden must have been when he was arrested, Lebo said the news threw him for a loop as well.
“I was shocked more than anything,” Lebo said. “Of all the guys that I’ve coached, and I’ve coached a lot of guys, (Bowden’s) the last guy that I would think would be involved in something like what he was charged with (but) when I talked with Shamarr about it, he completely put me at ease.”

That didn’t mean there weren’t some uneasy moments in the weeks that followed the arrest. Although he knew in his heart he was innocent, Bowden couldn’t be sure of his future as a free man, or his status on ECU’s team, until the grand jury made its decision.

For a guy who’s never even gotten so much as a speeding ticket, it must have been draining to know that all he could do was wait for the often tedious legal process to run its course. To his credit, Bowden tried to keep doing the things he’d been doing all spring — spending hours at the gym, sharing meals with teammates and friends, going to church and playing with his pet dogs.

“I knew it was going to be a long process and I just had to be patient,” said Bowden, who was on his way to a workout in Greensboro when he was arrested. “I had to let everybody do their job and I had to continue to do my part and let things unfold. ... I didn’t look at it as something that would go away quickly. It was going to take time to let everything manifest.

“I just believed. I don’t know any other way to put it. I just believed in God that things would work out and they did.”

Bowden isn’t the only Pirate who’s gotten good news on the legal front recently. Lebo said Thursday that charges against Corvonn Gaines and Tylisman Armstrong — two players arrested near Greenville’s Still Life nightclub on April 29 — also have been dismissed.

Gaines and Armstrong were charged with being intoxicated and disruptive and resisting a public officer, according to Greenville Police Department reports. All the charges were misdemeanors.

Lebo said he was pleased that Bowden, Gaines and Armstrong have not only had their names cleared, but that they are all fully reinstated members of East Carolina’s team. The coach is particularly hopeful the felony charge won’t be a burden on Bowden when he enters post-college life.

“Everybody makes mistakes,” Lebo said, “but I would have bet the ranch they were wrong (in Bowden’s case). I’m just happy to put it behind us and move forward. There’s a lot of damage that’s done even though everything’s dismissed and that’s the hard part. ... Hopefully we can work through that over the course of time.”
"Crimes of the Heart" debuts

By Kelley Kirk

Friday, June 8, 2012

Passion can make you do crazy things. Just look at Romeo and Juliet, a classic tale of love with deadly results.

Such is the case in the play “Crimes of the Heart,” which will be presented by Magnolia Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. today-Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday and 7:30 p.m. Thursday-June 16. All performances will be at the Music Academy of Eastern Carolina, 1400 Red Banks Road.

“It’s about three sisters from a small southern town,” said director Thomas Weaver. “They haven’t gotten over the death of their mother who committed suicide when they were little.”

Weaver, 22, graduated from East Carolina University this spring with a bachelor of arts in English and a bachelor of arts in theater. He was the assistant director for MAC’s production of “Lying in State” last winter, working with Andrea Croskery. Croskery is the producer of “Crimes of the Heart.”

Set in the 1970s, “Crimes of the Heart” has the Magrath sisters, Meg, Babe and Lenny, meet in their hometown of Hazlehurst, Miss., after Babe shoots her abusive husband.
While at their grandparents’ home, past resentments come to light and they’re forced to deal with the past while the current situation of Babe shooting her husband must also be resolved. Each sister must face the consequences of her personal “crime of the heart” that she has committed.

“It’s meaty but not depressing. It’s really a dark comedy,” Weaver said. The cast includes Erin Hildebrandt as Lenny McGrath, Sarah Ritchy as Chick Boyle, Allen Andrews as Doc Poter, Stephanie Morell as Meg McGrath, Amber Spencer as Babe Botrelle and Clinton Long as Barnette Lloyd.

Morell and Hildebrandt are regular actors with MAC, Spencer, Ritchy and Long are ECU students studying acting and Andrews does film work in Wilmington.

All of the actors are 26 years old or younger, which presented a challenge since none of the actors were alive during the era in which the play is set.

“They had a challenge with the props. The phone had a rotary dial, for example. The same thing happened with the briefcase. We didn’t know how to open it,” Weaver said. “We had to really make sure the actors knew how to use the props.”

Beth Henley finished writing “Crimes of the Heart” in 1978 and submitted the manuscript to several regional theaters, but none were interested. A friend, however, entered “Crimes of the Heart” in the annual Great American Play Contest at the Actors Theatre of Louisville. The play was named co-winner and then performed at the theater’s annual festival of new American plays in 1979. The play also won a Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

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High-cost college
Editorial

Your May 29 editorial “Our ‘means’” states that the House budget does not address increased funding of the UNC system and additional financial aid “... to help students hurt by large tuition and fee increases.” You address the symptom of the problem and not the cause. Why have there been large tuition and fee increases? My guess was faculty salaries were the cause and went online to find some research to back up my claims. Turns out I was only partly correct.

Andrew Gillen and Richard Vedder in “North Carolina's Higher Education System: Success or Failure?” analyze the role tax dollars play in our higher education system. Faculty salaries are a part. Administrative overhead at most of our public colleges is an even greater reason. They write, “At four-year schools, on average faculty do not make up even 50 percent of the workforce.” Some schools, Cape Fear Community College, for example, have reduced staff dramatically while increasing enrollment dramatically. All our public institutions should do likewise. In this age of computers, one would think we surely could do more with less.

The authors conclude, “... the relatively high levels of state appropriations in North Carolina have not served primarily to reduce student costs, but rather to increase spending levels at institutions in the state.”

Doug Aitken
Pinehurst
NCSU researchers help gear HIV message to black, college-aged women
By Amanda James

RALEIGH -- Although scientists have made great strides in helping people live with HIV, some researchers say the information people need to avoid contracting the virus is still not getting through to those at highest risk, particularly young African-American women.

Two professors at N.C. State University hope to change that. Fay Cobb Payton and James Kiwanuka-Tondo received a $252,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to come up with more effective ways to educate black, college-aged women about HIV.

“Here, in the Southeast of the U.S., the prevention of HIV is not on the agenda,” said Kiwanuka-Tondo, an association professor of communications. “For many people with HIV, particularly people of minorities with no health insurance, they wouldn’t be able to afford the cure if one is ever created. Therefore, we need to minimize the ‘HIV fatigue’ and bring back the sense of urgency to the conversation about HIV.”

African-Americans accounted for an estimated 44 percent of new HIV infections nationwide in 2009, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control. The estimated rate of new HIV infections among African-American women was 15 times that of white women and more than three times that of Latina women.

N.C. infection rate high
In North Carolina, the rate of new HIV infections among all races is 41 percent higher than the national rate.

Payton and Kiwanuka-Tondo are conducting focus groups and analyzing HIV prevention messages geared toward black, college-aged women, a group that researchers have not targeted because they were not considered a high-risk group for HIV infection. Payton, an associate professor of information systems, said they noticed incomplete information and a lack of cultural relevancy in messages aimed at this group. For example, the people portrayed on posters about HIV/AIDS were often not the same race as the target women.
Some of the information was hard to decipher. Part of the National Institutes for Health website forced black women trying to read information about HIV to choose between information geared toward women and information aimed at African-Americans, which differed.

Payton and Kiwanuka-Tondo will use the findings from their focus groups to hone social-media messages and other strategies.

This kind of research could be invaluable, said Yvonne Torres, HIV and sexually transmitted disease program manager at Wake County Human Services. Torres organizes three teams of people who do HIV prevention work in Wake County, including peer educators who visit colleges and universities.

Torres says there has been an increase in other sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, in Wake County in the past couple of years, which could signal an increase in HIV.

Also, county workers are seeing a higher number of teens as young as 14 with chlamydia and gonorrhea, suggesting that information about HIV is needed for people at a much younger age than previously considered, she said.

Teaching prevention

One of Torres’ social workers, Noshima Darden-Tabb, said she works with a few women in college who have HIV. One of them told her she got tested after reading an article in Ebony magazine about HIV prevention, just to make sure she didn’t have an undetected sexually transmitted disease. She realized she must have contracted HIV when she was a teenager.

“Some of these girls feel it won’t happen to them,” said Darden-Tabb.

Another social worker, Katie Horstman, says she finds that most of the African-American women she’s worked with are being infected in ways that could have been prevented. One of the aims of the peer educators is to emphasize to young women the importance of having their partners wear condoms and to learn to be more assertive about it.

Naisha Brown, a doctoral student at UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Public Health, also has seen the growing trend of HIV among young African-American women, through an outreach program she coordinates at Christian Faith Baptist Church in Raleigh. Brown says she thinks many college-aged African-American women believe there are fewer eligible African-American
men, which might make them more tolerant of men who have multiple sexual partners.

“Both people in that situation are putting themselves at risk,” said Brown. “If you are teaching them true facts about HIV then you have a fighting chance of giving people tools for how they can react.”

Brown supports the research at NCSU as long as it focuses on creating messages that stay close to the voice of their target population, and avoid cementing stereotypes and stigmas attached with the disease.
Ceremonies hail grads heading into military
By Natalie DiBlasio, USA TODAY
Updated 1d 22h ago

Not that long ago, Joshua Stinson's decision to join the Marines wouldn't have gotten big fanfare in his community.

But the 18-year-old is one of a growing number of military-bound high school seniors honored in special graduation ceremonies across the nation.

"There are all sorts of bells and whistles and ceremonies for kids going off to college, but there is no conversation about kids going off to the military," said Ken Hartman, former school board member in Cherry Hill, N.J. "What about these kids going off to war? Sacrificing their lives? There is nothing for them."

Frustrated by a lack of recognition for enlistees at Cherry Hill High School, Hartman launched Our Community Salutes, a program to distinguish the graduates entering the military.

Since Hartman's first ceremony in 2009, Our Community Salutes has grown. This year, 4,700 enlistees were recognized in 22 ceremonies in states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.
"It's important that people know and care that young kids enlist in the military — it slips under the radar," Stinson said. "They think everyone enlists after college or that are in their 20s, but really there are kids that enlist out of high school."

In fiscal 2011, 28.8% of enlistees were 17 or 18 when they entered active duty, totaling 43,850, Department of Defense spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said.

The ceremonies show the graduates that their community is behind them, said Gene Clark, executive director of Our Community Salutes.

"It's taken off, and it's going to explode," Clark said. "I already have 44 cities planning ceremonies for 2013, and that number is only going up."

Toni Stinson, Joshua's mother, organized this week's inaugural Our Community Salutes event in Fredericksburg, Va., after the school board rejected her request to have military-bound students in her son's class wear red, white and blue cords at graduation.

"People in the service now can expect to deploy, and families sacrifice a lot," she said. "It isn't a safe place that they go. They deserve recognition."

Stinson, holding back tears, told the students they "will certainly make this community proud. Train hard. Stay safe."

Speakers, including Virginia Congressman Rob Wittman, Brig. Gen. Joseph Osterman USMC and Chief Master Sgt. Scott Fuller USAF, made up the receiving line after the 37 recognized enlistees accepted their congressional record of enlistment. "Thank you for your sacrifice. Service really is a family affair," Wittman said, greeting each family individually throughout the evening.

Navy enlistee Joshua Love didn't have any family attending the ceremony in Fredericksburg, and he didn't know anyone at the ceremony, but he appreciated the support. "It's an honor to be recognized. I really feel like my community is behind me," he said.

Love will leave for Navy basic training in September. "Before I go," he said, "I just want to live my life as a kid for a little bit longer."