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Summer swelters
High of 102 unofficially breaks record

- Excessive heat warning continues today; hospital begins to see patients with heat-related illnesses.

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Pitt County was sizzling again Wednesday as excessive heat smothered the area for a third straight day. A high of 102 was reported at the Pitt-Greenville Airport Wednesday, according to the National Weather Service. The temperature unofficially broke the record of 100 degrees for the day recorded in 1923, said Robert Frederick of the National Weather Service in Newport. The official report was expected around midnight.

It was the hottest day of the year so far in Greenville, with the heat index reaching 115 degrees and surrounding counties experiencing indexes as high as 118 degrees. "The temperature is really high, but the heat index is way higher than we've seen it this year," Frederick said. "It's about as hot as it can get out there."

The heat index combines temperature and humidity to reflect how warm the air feels. Pitt was placed under an excessive heat warning by the weather service Wednesday.

Pitt County Memorial Hospital spokeswoman Barbara Dunn said since Monday there have been about four or five people treated each day for heat-related illnesses. The patients ranged from outdoor workers, football players and golfers to children and the homeless, she said.

To keep their employees out of the emergency department, business owners are adjusting work schedules to avoid heat-related illnesses.

Wade Whaley, owner of Grifton's Whaley Contractors Inc., said he doesn't hesitate to pull his workers off a job or cut back on manual labor. "A person can't stand but so much of it," said Whaley, whose crew does land development work. "We don't want anyone to have a heat stroke or anything like that. We'd rather quit early and give them more breaks than to have that person get too hot and have to be without work for a while. Health is foremost over the job."

Coaches are keeping a close eye on their athletes as practice for fall sports gets into full swing locally. East Carolina University held its first two-a-day football practices Wednesday, working out in the morning and evening. After pushing Tuesday's practice back four hours to beat the heat, the Pirates will do the same today, according spokesman Tom McClellan.

J.H. Rose High School also is holding two practices each day. Rampants coach Greg Thomas says coaches are monitoring players and providing water breaks to prevent problems and adhere to guidelines from Pitt County Schools athletics director Bob Dailey. Dailey asks coaches to take extra precautions to prevent injury or sickness.

"We're going through two-a-days right now so not only is it physically harder on the kids, but the heat just drains you," Thomas said. "It's definitely a concern."

Today's high is expected to reach 102, but some relief should come this weekend, the weather service said. Temperatures could drop to 88-92 degrees by Saturday, Frederick said.

"It's still going to be hot, but nothing like what we've seen the last couple of days," said Frederick, who noted that another heat warning would be in effect today and an advisory is likely for Friday.

"People still need to take the proper precautions," he said.

The weather service advises people to stay inside if possible, but wear light-colored clothing and drink plenty of fluids if outdoor activities are unavoidable.
Our Views

New faces

Fans seek stability for Pirate sports

Accepting the athletics director position in 2004, Terry Holland said, "The main attraction of East Carolina University is the spirit, pride and determination of its students, faculty, alumni and fans."

That loyalty, fierce and distinctive, is not blind. And all those associated with the school need assurance from Holland and Chancellor Steve Ballard that the stability crucial to success may soon come to the men's basketball program.

In his brief tenure at East Carolina, Holland has been responsible for replacing the head coaches of the school's three most prominent sports programs. Football Head Coach John Thompson was fired in 2004 and was replaced by Skip Holtz. Baseball skipper Randy Mazey was replaced by Billy Godwin in 2005. And Ricky Stokes, the former University of Virginia guard who played under Holland, took over men's basketball from Bill Herrion in 2005.

But while Holtz and Godwin succeeded, Stokes' team floundered, winning only 14 games in two years, including a dismal 6-34 mark last season. On Monday, he moved to a new position in the athletics department. Assistant coach Mack McCarthy will be acting head coach for the 2007-08 season.

The performance of Stokes' teams these two years never met expectations, even at a university that has struggled to build a basketball tradition. While he entered the head coaching job with high hopes, his reassignment is warranted given the results.

The timing of the move, only two weeks before the start of the fall semester and months after the end of basketball season, is curious. One hopes that today's press conference will help provide answers about the move and explain how the school plans to build a basketball program worthy of the state's third largest university.

Pirate fans devote considerable passion and effort to East Carolina. They deserve answers, and the assurance that basketball may soon join the many success stories in the athletics department.
Gaudio takes the whistle at Wake Forest

By Joedy McCreary
The Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM — Dino Gaudio has taken over for Skip Prosser before.

More than two decades ago, Gaudio replaced Prosser at a parochial high school in West Virginia and eventually led that team to a state title. On Wednesday, Wake Forest chose Gaudio to again take Prosser’s place, this time to replace his late mentor in the cutthroat Atlantic Coast Conference.

“Just like this situation, he left me good players,” Gaudio said. “Following him was a terrific tribute. He laid the foundation, set the table and it all worked out, and I hope the same thing happens here.”

Wake Forest athletic director Ron Wellman, who signed Gaudio to a five-year contract, praised the 50-year-old Gaudio for his strength during the two weeks of grieving that followed Prosser’s July 26 death from an apparent heart attack.

While making such a long-term commitment to a coach with a career record of 68-124 might appear unusual, Wellman said he never considered the possibility of hiring an interim coach.

“That is the worst-case scenario for a coach to be in,” Wellman said. “What you’re saying is that you’re a lame duck. And how you coach is after every (game), the players start thinking you’re a lame duck. That was not an option that I was interested in whatsoever.

“Quite frankly, I expect that to be the first contract (of many) for Dino,” he said. He declined to discuss the value of Gaudio’s deal, as is the practice at the private school.

The speedy hire also appeared aimed at emphasizing stability and continuity to a recruiting class that’s ranked as one of the nation’s best. Among the commitments are forward Al-Farouq Aminu of Norcross, Ga. (ranked No. 3 nationally by Scout.com), and center Ty Walker of Wilmington (ranked No. 14 by the service).

“The best way I can say it is, I feel really excited about this year, and I feel really, really, really excited about the next four years,” Gaudio said, taking care not to break NCAA rules banning coaches from discussing high school players. “I think that’s all I’m allowed to say.”

Wellman outlined his search plans during a meeting with current staff members last Friday, the day before Prosser’s burial in Cincinnati.

“My priority was to secure a basketball coach that would do the things that they had laid the foundation for,” Wellman said.

A nearly four-hour interview with Gaudio on Monday led Wellman to strongly consider him that night, and a day later he finalized the decision to promote Prosser’s longtime assistant.

“Nobody is going to be more driven, more motivated to complete the task that we set out a few years ago,” Gaudio said. “We’ll make certain that what we started, we’re going to finish.”

Sophomore point guard Ishmael Smith said the players were relieved that Gaudio was promoted, because there was a lingering worry about having to learn the new systems and schemes of an unfamiliar leader.

“Coach would want us to keep fighting, keep pushing, put this behind us and move on with coach Gaudio,” Smith said.

Prosser and Gaudio first paired up in 1980-81 at a Catholic school in the northern panhandle of West Virginia. The native of Yorkville, Ohio, took over the program at tiny Wheeling Central in 1984-85 after Prosser left to join Xavier’s staff.

A year later, he won a state championship.

They reunited in 1987 under Pete Gillen at Xavier and stayed together until 1993, when Prosser took the head job at Loyola of Maryland and Gaudio accepted a similar position at Army. Gaudio went 56-72 in four seasons with the Black Knights before moving to Loyola of Maryland, where he was 32-52 before he resigned in 2000.

He rejoined Prosser at Xavier in 2000-01, and the two moved to Wake Forest together the following season.

Prosser’s death following a midday jog stunned the college basketball world and left Wake Forest’s close-knit campus in disbelief.
Tax free, and bound for college

In a way, I felt some sympathy for Dan and his mates as they joined parents (I'm a godparent) on the “tax-free” shopping weekend designed to help them do their “tax-free” shopping into stores in the dog days of August. It was the tail-end of back-to-school time, after all, and in our case, a bit more monumental, off-to-college time.

The freshmen-to-be weren’t really worried about the clothes and all. But they likely were wondering about when next week comes and we pack it off to higher education and they’re unloading at the dorm. What humiliating thing will a parent say upon departure for home? Something about underwear, perhaps? Or calling home every day? Or getting to bed early? It will happen, too, because it is the way of the Higher Powers to make separation easier. By the time the appointed hour of leaving a young man or woman on campus actually comes, the students won’t be upset at all. They’ll be trading stories about how uncool the old folks are and happy to be where the sodas are plentiful and the snacks are without discernable nutritional value.

Last weekend, however, families roun the Triangle were on excursions, buying things they hadn’t thought about in years — shower caddies, plastic storage boxes, flashlights, hooks for towels in bathrooms, pens and notebooks, computer paper. The crowds at Target and other stores where you can buy basically anything except major surgery were packed, and there were mini-family dramas in every aisle. It was a little like a world tour, where every turn of the cart seemed to bring one into a zone of diplomatic negotiation.

One young guy, bound for Chapel Hill, I think, stood wearily while his poor mother ran one armload of shirts after another past him for approval. “No.” “No.” “Uh ... no.” “You’re kidding. No.”

The young women seemed to have an easier time. One spoke of Meredith, apparently her mother’s alma mater, and purchases were amicable. There were cell phone interruptions to consult with friends, but no big confrontations.

For all those adults in all those aisles, it is a melancholy and worrisome time, a passage for those who thought they’d pretty much been through ‘em all, at least the tough ones. They were wrong, and some of them have gone completely around the bend.

I turned ‘round the corner sometime back, when I began to write a “college primer,” attempting to cover all the possible problems, challenges, decisions, etc., that would face my guy in the next year. It contained profound position statements on money (saving it) to studying (firmly behind doing it several hours a day) to the infirmary (“go when you are sick”) to sunscreen (always use it) to securing valuables (make sure you lock everything down) to calling home (regularly and with details) to drugs and alcohol (against them) to girls (in favor of association with them, particularly at Sunday school).

A friend who’s sent two kids through college looked over my work, with which I planned not only to guide the boy through college but also to make a gazillion dollars selling to nervous parents at back-to-school time.

Anyway, he read about half of it and said: “You understand, of course, that this kid graduated from high school, has been to Europe, drives a car and works a job. This is OK, I suppose, but ... well, might you have any access to tranquilizers of some sort?”

And when another parent of two current college students read my chapter titled “Safety and Security,” she turned to me and noted: “You know, he’s going to college. He’s not joining the Special Forces.”

The reality check brought what should have been the obvious revelation. It’s far too late to “crum” for life at this point. The young people are who they are going to be, and they will follow their values as they have formed them. They’re more mature than we think they are. They’re more capable than we think they are. They’re smarter than we think they are. Their college careers will have moments of triumph and failure and everything in between. Mistakes. Good choices. Bad choices. And, when the time comes to drive off next week, they won’t miss us as much as we’ll miss them. But that’s OK.

The primer has been cut down to four pages. I still think there’s some good stuff in there.

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Doctors' group has clout cut

New buffer added for licensing board

BY LYNN BONNER
STAFF WRITER

Challenged by a lawsuit, the state is reducing the influence a private doctors' advocacy group has over the state board that licenses doctors.

A law the legislature passed last week changes the way some members get on the state regulatory board, putting a wider buffer between the doctors' association and the state board.

Now, the Medical Society, the private professional group, nominates seven of the 12 members that the governor appoints to the Medical Board. Under the new system, a nine-member review panel will recommend seven doctors and a physicians assistant or nurse practitioner to the board.

The review panel will have four Medical Society members.

The law came in response to a lawsuit filed this year against the Medical Board, the Medical Society, the state and Gov. Mike Easley. The suit, brought by a doctor and three patients, claimed the state had given control of a public job to a private entity.

The board and the Medical Society's role in nominating a majority of its members had been the target of criticism from patients who said the board was more interested in protecting doctors than it was in patients who raised claims of negligence or misconduct.

One of the plaintiffs, Lynette Miracle, blamed the Medical Board for allowing two doctors with histories of drug abuse to practice in the state. The doctors did not diagnose her with breast cancer when she visited a Duplin County clinic in 2001 and 2002.

In previous years, legislation was introduced to try to reduce or eliminate the Medical Society's influence over board selections, but the bills didn't pass.

Stephen Keene, the Medical Society's deputy vice president, said he expects the lawsuit to be dropped.

"I certainly think this new approach resolves some or all of the questions that have been raised in the lawsuit," he said.

Burton Craig, the Raleigh lawyer representing the plaintiffs, said Wednesday he had not talked to all his clients and didn't know whether they would continue with suit.

The legislature could have strengthened the review panel by adding a seat for a representative from one of the state's medical schools, Craig said.

"Nonetheless, the law is "a step in the right direction," he said. "This never would have happened if this doctor and these patients hadn't stepped forward to challenge the Medical Society's control."

The Medical Society will send Easley recommendations for filling three board seats in October, before the new law kicks in.