THE DAILY CLIPS

August 22, 2008

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
Holtz relishes postgame talks with Holland

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

There is a conversation awaiting Skip Holtz every time he walks off the football field, no matter the time of day or night or the city.

Before Holtz talks to his wife or any fans or reporters, the fourth-year East Carolina head coach has a brief embrace and then a conversation with ECU director of athletics Terry Holland. Even if he doesn’t want to.

The length, detail and mood of the conversations depends on the outcome of the game, of course. But the fact the mini-postgame huddles between the two have faithfully taken place since Holtz’s first game in 2005 speak to the ongoing mutual respect that seems to make their relationship work.

Speaking to that mutual respect, both men suggest it’s the other man who dictates the content and length of those postgame pow-wows.

“It’s usually just a hug, that’s how it starts out and then it depends on what’s on his mind,” Holland said of Holtz.

Likewise, Holtz seems to think he is merely answering to the man who hired him to replace former coach John Thompson in December of 2004.

“To me, they’re invaluable,” Holtz said of his sideline conversations with Holland, a former basketball coach and AD at Virginia. “You’ve got a guy like Terry Holland, with his experience, his expertise.

As long as he’s been around sports and the environments and big games he’s coached in, I value his opinion and what he saw in the game and how it played out.”
Drawing Up A Title Run

After twice falling short, Holtz & Co. have championship aspirations

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

The way of doing things is no longer new. The speeches have all been given. The playbook has been studied through to the index.

Three seasons, four recruiting classes, 20 wins and two bowl games in, East Carolina is Skip Holtz’s football team. Except for the small handful of precious fifth-year seniors, everyone else was hand-picked by the man who adopted the team in December of 2004, a team which carried 3-20 as its most significant statistic from the two seasons previous.

But, as Holtz crafts a game plan for the Pirates’ Aug. 30 season opener with Virginia Tech in Charlotte, there is one thing still missing.

Despite an 8-5 finish to the 2007 season and a last-second triumph over Boise State at the Hawaii Bowl, the Pirates were spectators for the Conference USA championship game. The same was true for the 2006 Pirates, making the elusive C-USA crown the No. 1 target for the new season.

“We’ve had high expectations as a staff every year going into it,” said Holtz, now 20-17 with the Pirates. “We have the same goals this year that we had our first year. They’re probably a little more attainable this year when you look at where we are as a football team.”

Last year, an unexpected stumble at then 1-8 Marshall Nov. 10 ended a five-game winning streak for the Pirates in C-USA and effectively forked the division lead to UCF, which then toppled Tulsa in the second C-USA championship game.

In 2006, ECU was on four-game run when the Pirates got derailed at Rice in an 18-17 loss to end the C-USA campaign and ECU’s title game hopes.

While so much has changed for ECU in the Holtz era, year four seems centered on the C-USA title game.

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Carson not surprised by Merritt’s success

BY NATHAN SUMMERS

The Daily Reflector

Bill Carson saw it coming from a mile away, or at least a quarter mile.

American LaShawn Merritt dominated the 400 meters at the Olympic Games in Beijing early Thursday, and his former coach at East Carolina didn’t need to see the race to know Merritt was going to win.

What Carson called a series of sound career decisions led Merritt, a native of Portsmouth, Va., to become one of the world’s most dominant runners.

And while Merritt’s dazzling defeat of heated U.S. rival and defending 400 champ Jeremy Wariner led to a dream-come-true gold medal, Carson thinks it was just the beginning of a great career.

“He will be the next Michael Johnson, not only as a runner but as an ambassador in the sport,” said Carson, who

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MERRITT

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coached Merritt, 22, during the gold medalist’s one year at ECU in 2006. “A great race someday will be (Jamaica’s 2008 multiple medalist) Usain Bolt against LaShawn in the quarter. Bolt doesn’t run the event now, but since he has dominated the other events, he eventually will.”

Carson, the former long-time ECU track coach, was making his usual Thursday visit to a sick friend in Tennessee. When he got back into his car after the visit, Carson said he heard a sports radio station reporting Merritt’s gold medal performance.

As many feelings as the announcement gave the coach, surprise was certainly not among them.

“I totally predicted it,” said Carson, who planned to watch the race Thursday night. “In October, LaShawn called me and we were just talking and he told me that Wariner had broken it off with his coach, Clyde Hart (longtime Baylor University coach). I told him the only thing Wariner had was the best coach. That was the one advantage he had. (Hart) had brought Wariner along just like he brought Michael Johnson along.”

But it wasn’t just the choice of coaches. Carson said Merritt, along with his mother, left ECU early but did so with a plan for success, including finishing his degree at Old Dominion.

Carson largely credits Merritt’s mother for helping her son define the best surroundings for being a winner.

“He got on the right path and he stayed on it,” Carson said. “I only had him for short while, but it was a great time for me. I thought I would have the full year with him. I knew it would only be a year. But we showed the world what he was.”

Carson also pointed out Merritt’s recent surge leading up to the Beijing Games as a factor in the gold medal race. In June, Merritt bested Wariner in Berlin and then beat him again at the Olympic trials.

But Wariner was still the favorite to defend his title after he bounced back by beating Merritt in Rome and Paris in the final build-up to Beijing.

“He had already made tremendous progress to do what it was going to take,” Carson said of Merritt. “I told him I didn’t even doubt he would beat Wariner. I think the last time they ran over in Europe he didn’t even try that hard. He was just setting Wariner up for the big one. He wasn’t showing Wariner over in Europe what he was going to see when it counted.”

Nathan Summers can be reached at nsummers@coxnc.com, or at (252)329-9595.
Deluged by drink, colleges look for a way to cope

Student’s sentence stings, but no jail term in DWI death

BY SARAH OVASKA
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — A former N.C. State University student who ran over and killed a bicyclist as he drove home drunk from class on his 21st birthday will not be able to drink or drive for three years, but avoided prison.

Brian Anthony Reid, of Graham, pleaded guilty Thursday to felony death by vehicle and impaired driving after he ran over 60-year-old Nancy Leidy just before 11 a.m. April 23. Leidy was struck as she pedaled down a side street near the university campus where she frequently volunteered to teach in the entomology department.

Her widower, retired NCSU professor Ross Leidy, asked Wake Senior Resident Superior Court

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A new semester? It's beer pong time

BY ERIC FERRERI, JAY PRICE AND JESSE JAMES DECONTO
STAFF WRITERS

DURHAM - Need proof that college students drink to excess? The two top sellers this week at Sam's Quik Stop, a convenience store near the Duke University campus, are cases of Busch Light and ping-pong balls.

Beer needs no explanation. The ping-pong balls are a core element of beer pong, a popular college drinking game that involves the bouncing of a ball and the chugging of a cup of beer.

"We're going to have to start buying them in gross or manufacturing them ourselves or something," said Mikey Hayes, a clerk at Sam's.

At Duke, President Richard Brodhead has joined an initiative by college presidents to urge a national discussion on the potential lowering of the legal drinking age as a way to combat binge drinking. Duke is the sole North Carolina university to commit to the initiative thus far, though its emergence is spurring others, including the UNC system, to consider it as well.

Across the Triangle this week, students are meeting roommates, buying books and rekindling friendships over pitchers and shots. Many are underage, drinking in the privacy of a dorm room or shoulder-to-shoulder with hundreds of others at welcome-back fraternity parties.

Advocates for a lower drinking age say the current law has led students to "dangerous, clandestine binge-drinking," and suggest a lower age may quell extreme behavior. Others, such as Hayes, the Quik Stop employee, think it's a dangerous idea.

"I don't think they realize what they're getting themselves into having a bunch of drunk children on campus," he said. "I just think they'll have more people binge drinking by making it legitimate."

Social cultures and drinking habits vary from campus to campus, but alcohol is a common denominator. Near the N.C. Central University campus, cars this week were dotted with splashy full-color fliers advertising a back-to-school bash where stretch limousines provide the transportation and ladies drink for free.

A couple of miles away in Durham, bars lining Main Street entice thirsty Duke students with 32-ounce cups of cheap domestic swill and drink specials like the Irish Car Bomb and shots of Southern Comfort doused with lime juice.

And in Chapel Hill and Raleigh, neon beer signs glow invitingly from the windows of dozens of bars just steps from the UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State campuses.

At NCCU, a big night out for most students includes some casual drinking in an off-campus apartment before heading off to dance in a club, said Jon Smith, 24, a senior.

It isn't the guzzle-Jack-Daniels-from-the-bottle Animal House scene, perhaps because the historically black institution doesn't have as strong an on-campus fraternity presence as larger universities like UNC-Chapel Hill, he said. And NCCU students share a sense of community and responsibility, even when partying, he added.

"If I'm around my friends and I have too much, they stop me because they don't want to have to take care of me for the next three days," Smith said.

WHY AMETHYST?

The word Amethyst is derived from the Ancient Greek words meaning "not (a)" and "intoxicated" (methustos). According to mythology, Amethyst was a young girl who incurred the wrath of the god Dionysus after he became intoxicated with red wine. Amethyst cried to goddess Diana for help. Diana immediately turned the girl into a white stone. Upon discovering what had happened Dionysus wept, and, as his tears fell into his goblet, the wine spilled over the white rock, turning it purple.

The purple gemstone amethyst was widely believed to be an antidote to the negative effects of intoxication. In ancient Greece, drinking vessels and jewelry were often made of amethyst and used during feasts and celebrations to ward off drunkenness and to promote moderation.

The amethyst is thus a meaningful symbol for this initiative, which aims to encourage moderation and responsibility as an alternative to the drunkenness and reckless decisions about alcohol that mark the experience of many young Americans.

WWW.AMETHYSTINITIATIVE.ORG

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Would a lower drinking age mean more or less responsible drinking? Log on and tell us what you think at trianglemom2mom.com.

The Amethyst Initiative — as the lower-drinking-age project is dubbed — doesn't specifically target a drop to age 18, but many students say that's the proper age. After all, they say, that's the age at which American youngsters can go off to war.

"If you have to register for the draft, you're old enough to drink," said Joshua Phthisic, 18, an N.C. State freshman from Perquimans County. "If you can be asked to die for your country, you should be allowed to decide whether to drink, too."

But Phthisic and others conceded that some of the attraction of underage drinking is the simple fact that it isn't allowed.

"Once you're legal, there's not that adrenaline rush of trying to hide it from your parents or whoever," said Courtney Staton, 18, of Princeville, another NCSU freshman.

But other NCSU students said lowering the drinking age to 18 would make alcohol even more accessible for students still in high school, since some high school seniors are 18.

"If you could drink legally in high school, that's a terrible idea," said Danny Poe, 22, an economics major from Jacksonville.

Some question whether teenagers are mature enough to handle the responsibility that comes with alcohol.

For Staton Ellis, who owns Satisfaction, a popular Duke hangout on Main Street in Durham, a lower drinking age would be a mixed blessing.

"It would be a big windfall for restaurants; that's a lot of potential customers," he said. "It would also be a big headache because 18-year-olds aren't as mature."

The handful of 19-year-old UNC-Chapel Hill sophomores who sat outside their fraternity house one recent day nursing bottles of Bud Light said college students would probably respond well to the added responsibility of being legal. And, they added, the current drinking age is the problem because it promotes bingeing.

In particular, they spoke of "pre-gaming," or loading up on alcohol before heading out for a night on the town. It's cheaper to toss back a few shots or brews that way, especially if you're underage and not guaranteed to get into a bar.

"Let's get in sync with the rest of the world," said Lucas Oliveira, a UNC-Ch Chapel Hill sophomore who grew up in Brazil. "That might help with a lot of the dumb stuff that happens in college when you're drunk."

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or (919) 932-2008
State retirees, beware

If you're planning to retire from N.C. state government, better start your paperwork really early. I submitted my paperwork for retirement well within the time frame shown on the retirement system's Web site, but apparently that wasn't early enough.

I'm scheduled to retire Sept. 1, but now I understand after talking with retirement system officials, there's no guarantee I will get my first retirement check on Sept. 25. According to them, they are working on the end of April's forms!

Is this system somehow connected with BEACON? We all know how well that has gone.

I also wonder whether Robert Powell, the state controller, is experiencing this same problem since he's retiring at the end of this month, too. My guess is, probably not.

Marilyn "Partha" Howell, Beaufort
Ex-administrator at NCCU arrested

BY STANLEY B. CHAMBERS JR.
STAFF WRITER

DURHAM — A former N.C. Central University administrator accused of stealing money from the school was arrested Thursday by university police.

Franklin Bernard Carver, 57, of Skybrook Lane was charged with two counts of obtaining property by false pretense. He was released from the Durham County jail after signing a written promise to appear in court.

Carver is accused of obtaining $4,333 by signing fraudulent documents between April 2003 and February 2004, claiming that two people were doing scientific research when they weren’t, according to an arrest warrant.

In February, a state audit claimed that Carver received more than $36,000 for improperly authorizing payments of federal grant funds to students and others for scientific work that was never done.

The checks were given to unidentified people to cash. Carver received some of that money in return to make credit card payments, the audit said. Those incidents are alleged to have occurred between 2003 and 2004.

Carver, who was assistant provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs at the time, also had a relationship with a student that he did not report — which is against school policy — and used a state credit card for personal purchases.

Carver was fired earlier this year.

sten.chambers@newsobserver.com
or (919) 956-2426