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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Big East to add two football teams

Staff and wire reports

The conference carousel is spinning again after the Big East Conference unanimously agreed Tuesday to expand its number of football-playing schools to 10.

The Big East, which currently has eight football-playing members, made the announcement after a board of directors meeting in Philadelphia.

East Carolina, long rumored as a possible candidate to join the Big East, was among the schools reported to be in consideration to join the conference.

Big East commissioner John Marinatto says potential expansion candidates will start to be evaluated.

ECU Director of Athletics Terry Holland stated Tuesday that while the school currently wasn’t in discussions with another league, it would be interested in being in a conference that better suited the Pirates geographically.

“At this time, there have been no discussions with any conference that has been considering expansion,” Holland said in a statement. “But we have consistently stated our interest in altering the geographic profile of our current conference or considering an opening in a conference with a geographic profile that is more consistent with our needs.”

There was no timetable announced for a decision.

One obvious candidate to join is Villanova.

The conference informed Villanova shortly before Labor Day that it wanted to add the Wildcats to the football roster. Villanova currently plays in the Colonial Athletic Association in FCS. Villanova won a national championship last year and is considering a move up to the Football Bowl Subdivision. If it does, that will fill one of the Big

“Of our football evaluation is ongoing,” Villanova AD Vince Nicastro said. “We are moving forward as quickly as we can, but not at the expense of being absolutely thorough. We still don’t have a specific decision date, but it is likely to be resolved sometime during this academic year.”

Villanova, which made the Final Four in 2009, has been part of the Big East basketball conference since 1980.

The Wildcats have played at the second-tier level since 1985 and rejected an earlier offer to join the Big East in 1997. Connecticut accepted an invitation that season to start the process to move up to what was known as Division I-A.

BIG EAST

Continued from C1

BIG EAST COMMISSIONER JOHN MARINATTO, shown in a photo from earlier this year, announced in a statement Tuesday that the conference would be looking to add two football-playing schools.
Among other schools mentioned in various reports as possible targets are Memphis, Central Florida, Temple, TCU and Houston.

Holland stressed in his statement that the Pirates have put themselves in the best position possible for realignment.

"If there are conference realignments, ECU has controlled the things that are under our control and has positioned itself well with expanded and new facilities as well as proven fan support," Holland said.

Holland also addressed ECU’s television market, which is often cited as a negative in conference realignment talks.

"Television dollars also tend to be a primary focus of conference expansions today and the value of various opportunities in that area are more difficult to measure," Holland said. “However, it is a fact that ECU delivers measurable 'eyeballs' in an area that would be the third largest television market in the country — within a 3.5 hour drive from Greenville — from Charlotte in the west to the east coast of N.C. and into Norfolk/Tidewater, Virginia.

"That area is also the home of over 80 percent of ECU's 130,000 living alumni and well over 90 percent of the 50,000 fans who pack Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium for football games."

ECU football coach Ruffin McNeill also praised the enthusiasm of the school's fanbase.

"If you have been to Greenville to see a football game, you have seen a big-time environment, big-time athletic facilities and a big-time following," he said. "I don't have to sell it because this place sells itself. We only can control what we can control. I've had an opportunity to be a part of four home games, I've seen it from afar and I've been a part of some big-time BCS stadiums. That stadium there in this city of Greenville and that fan support is second to none."

Nathan Summers and Jim Gentry contributed to this article.
Cancer keeps professor at Wilmington home but not out of UNCP classes

By Rodger Mullen
The Fayetteville Observer
Published: Wednesday, November 3, 2010 at 8:44 a.m.

PEMBROKE | The cancer that Joseph Lakatos is battling keeps him away from the public.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke professor has to teach classes by video conference from his home in Wilmington, to protect his immune system.

But Lakatos refuses to withdraw from life. The 42-year-old professor of accounting and business law is eagerly making plans for the future, many involving his 8-year-old son, Dillon.

This summer, the pair published a book, “Angel and Diesel: A Change in Family Plans.” The children’s book tells the story of two dogs who encourage their owners to get away from the television and enjoy family activities. Dillon wrote the story, and Lakatos did the illustrations. They are already working on a sequel.

“It’s going to be a series,” Lakatos said. “That’s the idea at this point.”

Joseph Lakatos was accustomed to a life on the go.

A native of Queens, N.Y., Lakatos worked as a lawyer and risk manager for Fidelity Investments. Before that, he was a lawyer for a Manhattan law firm specializing in malpractice cases and an auditor for Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

While at Fidelity, Lakatos taught a class at Boston College and fell in love with teaching. In 2003, he brought his classroom skills to UNCP.

“I enjoy the positive impact that a professor can have on the lives of students,” Lakatos said in telephone and e-mail interviews from his
Wilmington home. “It’s not just about teaching the material but about helping students figure out who they are and what they want and should be.”

But in 2004, Lakatos received a devastating diagnosis: follicular lymphoma. The median duration of the disease is 11 years, Lakatos said. He was Stage IVB when diagnosed. There is no cure.

The discovery set Lakatos on a grueling regimen of treatment that continues to this day.

Lakatos has undergone two rounds of chemotherapy, radiation treatment and a bone marrow transplant. He will undergo another bone marrow treatment in the next couple of months.

Staying positive is a challenge for Lakatos.

“I manage,” he said. “I have a great spirit. I don’t get down. Every once in a while it does hit me and I hyperventilate, but I catch myself.”

Walks on the beach help. So does prayer and meditation. Lakatos has had to temper his Type-A personality and learn to relax.

The cancer treatments have so weakened Lakatos that prolonged contact with the public puts him at risk. He must be vigilant about his hygiene and pay special attention to his diet.

“I can’t, unfortunately, shake people’s hands,” he said.

About a year ago, Lakatos and his son were driving to Disney World when Dillon had an idea. “Wouldn’t it be a great idea if we wrote a book?” he asked his father.

“He started writing it out,” Lakatos said. “I didn’t know what he was writing until we got to Disney World.”

The story that Dillon came up with on that car ride centers on the family’s own dogs, Angel and Diesel. On a Saturday morning, Diesel wakes up ready to play. Knowing the family likes to watch TV on weekends, Diesel devises a plan. Enlisting Angel, Diesel takes the remote control and hides it in the
backyard. When the family can’t find the remote, they decide to take the dogs and go to the beach instead of watching TV.

“Angel and Diesel” was published in August by New Hanover Printing; proceeds from sales will go toward leukemia and lymphoma research. Dillon said working on the book with his father was a lot of fun. He said he based the characters on his own family.

“I like going to the beach, so we decided to have the family wanting to watch TV and Diesel wanting to go to the beach,” Dillon said. “I thought of what we should write and he drew the pictures.”

Dillon and his father are discussing ideas for their next book, which will be part of a planned series on family values.

On a Wednesday afternoon at UNCP, about 20 students file into a business law class in the school’s business administration building.

Two large video screens dominate the room. As the students take their seats, the screens flicker to life and Lakatos’s image appears.

The setup is interactive. Lakatos can see the students, and they can see him.

“Have they fixed your seat?” Lakatos asks one student as she settles in.

“They did,” she replies.

“Is it comfortable?” Lakatos asks.

“Yes, it’s very comfortable,” the student says.

“Good. Let me know if it isn’t,” Lakatos said. “You paid good money for that seat.”

Then Lakatos launches into the class, which covers the topic of sexual harassment in the workplace. He shows a clip from the Michael Douglas movie “Disclosure” and asks the students to discuss the harassment scenario depicted in the film.
Students in Lakatos’ class praise his teaching skills. They say he manages to keep the class entertaining and interesting, despite not physically being in the room.

“He’s fun. He keeps the class entertained so everyone’s awake and paying attention,” said Anthony Moir, a junior. “He does a good job of keeping everyone’s attention.”

Senior Nina Oviedo said Lakatos’s business law class is one of her favorites. She said she corresponds with Lakatos by e-mail, seeking advice on her plans to become a lawyer.

“He definitely doesn’t spoon-feed you,” Oviedo said. “He’ll tell you how to do things and give you examples, but he lets you come to solutions on your own.”

Lakatos said he is determined to live his life to the fullest in the face of his health challenges. He said he believes a cure for leukemia is closer than ever.

Most of all, Lakatos said, he wants to continue to be a father to Dillon. After all, they have more books to write.

“The biggest thing is I don’t want to leave this Earth and leave my son,” he said. “I love being his dad. When I’m with him, everything goes away.”

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Career start to celebrate
Providence's Damon Magazu relishes game-winning play as ECU freshman

Former Providence High star Damon Magazu, now playing for East Carolina University, celebrates his game-winning interception in the Pirates' 33-27 overtime victory over North Carolina State on Oct. 16 in Greenville. AP

By Jay Edwards
Special Correspondent
Posted: Wednesday, Nov. 03, 2010

This time last year, Damon Magazu was one of best players on a Providence High football team fighting Butler and Independence for Southwestern 4A supremacy.

Just a year later, Magazu already is making a similar impact on East Carolina University's football team.

After a solid start to his Pirate career as a true freshman, Magazu made one of the biggest plays of the season for East Carolina when he intercepted N.C. State quarterback Russell Wilson on the 1-yard line to preserve a 33-27
overtime victory at home last month. The game also was his first collegiate
start.

"That was a special interception against a huge rival to win the game in
overtime, and something I won't forget," said Magazu. "But really it was just
a routine play, something we do in practice all the time. I read the wide
receiver and then quarterback and made a break on the ball."

The play not only got the attention of more than 50,410 fans in attendance -
an ECU record crowd - but also the thousands who watched on television.

"Honestly, I didn't think about how big that interception was until I got back
home that night and saw my phone," said Magazu. "I had so many texts and
calls from family, friends and people I hadn't talked to in years. It was great
to see how many people that win can effect."

While Magazu is just beginning to make an impact at East Carolina, those
who have watched him play previously are not surprised at what he already
is accomplishing.

What Magazu may have lacked in college game experience he has made up
for with a lifetime of being around the game.

Magazu's dad, Dave, is the offensive line coach for the Carolina Panthers,
and his oldest brother, Anthony, played quarterback for Kent State (2005-
09). Middle brother Dominick currently is a defensive back at Appalachian
State University.

"I grew up getting beat up all the time in games with my older brothers, but I
learned a lot from it," Magazu said.

Magazu's high school coach, Randy Long, who coached all three Magazu
boys, agrees.

The Magazus "are a very close-knit family, and football is a big part of their
lives," Long said. "Just being around the game all the time, I think, made
him a better player."

That experience allowed Magazu to transition from the high school game to
the college game faster than most.
Magazu, who was the 2009 SW4A Defensive Player of the Year, says he focuses on the mental part of the game as much as the physical part. He has 18 tackles and an interception this season as the backup safety to starters Derek Blacknall and Bradley Jacobs, earning a spot on the depth chart just months after finishing high school.

"I have never been the biggest, the fastest or the strongest player on the field," said Magazu, who stands 5-foot-11, 175 pounds. "My biggest strength has always started with the mental side of the game. If you know what you are doing and where you are supposed to be on every play, it gives you a huge advantage over a lot of players."

While Magazu is focused on making himself a better player, he also is looking forward to bigger and better things for East Carolina this season. The Pirates (5-3, 4-1), who currently sit atop the Conference USA standings, are looking to not only win their league but make a splash in the postseason.

"We have a lot of things we still want to do this year," Magazu said. "I just hope to do my part in that success, whatever that may be."

_The Charlotte Observer_
Smallest College Endowments Perform Best, Study Finds

By TAMAR LEWIN

College endowments returned an average of 12.6 percent in fiscal 2010 — and, unusually, the smallest endowments performed better than the largest ones, according to preliminary data from 80 colleges and universities gathered for the comprehensive Nacubo-Commonfund Study of Endowments to be released in January. According to the data, institutions with assets under $25 million had an average return of 14.1 percent, compared with 12.3 percent for those with assets over $1 billion. Smaller endowments tend to be invested more than larger ones in traditional assets such as domestic equities, which performed well in the rebound from the previous year’s sell-off, and fixed income, which benefited from declining interest rates. The institutions spent an average of 4.3 percent of their endowment in fiscal 2010, and on average, annual giving paid for 6.2 percent of their operating budgets.