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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
Working out whatever the weather

Dedicated athletes don’t let cold snap keep them indoors

BY KIM GRIZZARD
The Daily Reflector

Neither rain, nor heat, nor extreme cold keeps Mark Knowlton from suiting up and going on his route. And he’s not even a mailman.

He’s a 57-year-old cyclist who rode 24 miles Saturday, despite near-freezing temperatures and an inevitable wind chill that accompanies the sport.

Knowlton is among a number of area athletes who have refused to be sidelined during what has been an unusually long cold snap for North Carolina. Temperatures have often dipped into the teens and seldom climbed above 40 since the beginning of the year, driving a number of outdoorsmen inside.

Craig Andrews is not one of them. An avid duck hunter since starting at age 5 with a Daisy Ryder BB gun, Andrews set out in 19-degree temperatures last Tuesday to hunt along the Pamlico Sound. Andrews and his hunting buddy took along shovels to break up the ice and then sat for hours watching for ducks.

“There’s something about going out and feeling that cold air get in your lungs,” Andrews, 32, said. “You get out and see that beautiful sunrise and the frost and the ice on the ground and the ducks flying.

“Men love adventure; that’s just the way God designed us,” he said. “Part of that is why we

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sit out there for hours when it's 22 degrees outside and the water that had splashed on you is now frozen on your jacket. It's just kind of ingrained in us."

Andrews has hunted in single-digit temperatures, though not in North Carolina. With a season that is only open for 30 to 60 days, he said, duck hunters cannot afford to be too choosy about temperatures. Unseasonably warm temperatures can cause ducks to lay low or even reverse migrate, so cold weather is generally the hottest time for duck hunting.

"It's just really a badge of honor or anything like that," Andrews said. "That's just duck season."

"Truthfully, these really cold snaps like this, we really like them," he said. "There's some that stay home, but there are actually lots of us out there."

That is not the case on the tennis courts. Glenn Crawley and his tennis partner pretty much had River Birch Tennis Center to themselves last Tuesday night.

"We have the pick of the courts," Crawley, 46, said. "We turn the lights on ourselves, typically, and shut the lights off before we go.

"About the only time we get company is when there's a police patrol that comes out there occasionally," he said, laughing.

"I think it's because we're out there, and they're wondering what we're doing."

Crawley, who grew up playing hockey in Canada, is not a big fan of indoor exercise. When he started playing tennis about a decade ago, he didn't let little things like snow or ice stop him, as long as it wasn't on the court.

"My family thinks I'm crazy," Crawley said, "But they know I have a lot of fun, so they don't stop me from going."

Mike McCammon, director of the physiology program at East Carolina University, said cold weather should not keep people from going outside for exercise.

"If it's minus 30 degrees, you don't want to exercise. There's nothing here (that cold)," McCammon said. "I've lived in Greenville now 29 years, I've never had a day that was too cold to exercise."

To prove his point, he was out jogging on Thursday. McCammon, who is associate director of ECU's Human Performance Laboratory, said healthy people who do not suffer from conditions aggravated by cold — such as exercise-induced asthma — are perfectly safe keeping up their routines in cold weather. Even cyclists, whom McCammon considers among the most at risk in winter, don't have to put the brakes on their exercise as long as they take care not to leave skin exposed in wind and cold.

McCammon said, in general, hot weather poses far more risks than cold for people exercising outdoors.

"I'm all for exercising in the cold," he said. "We're just not used to the cold, but there's no reason why people should cut back."

Cold keeps Marvin Droe off the golf course, but not for the reason most people would think. Droe waits in the clubhouse with friends at Bradford Creek during winter months until the greens thaw enough for anyone to be allowed on the course.

Droe, 80, hit the links two days last week even though he had to wait until nearly noon to start his game.

"I'll tell you the big reason we go out," he said. "At my age, I'm not going to get any better than I am now. The guys that I play with, it's really a social gathering."

Droe enjoys the health benefits of walking the course, even on days he has to wear a facemask to keep warm. He once played in Reno, Nev., at 25 degrees with snow on the ground and will play in almost any kind of weather — except for lightning.

But in weather like eastern North Carolina experienced recently, he sometimes finds himself playing alone.

"When it's really cold," Droe said, "the dedicated are the only ones out there."

Mark Knowlton was the only one to show up for East Carolina Velo Cycling Club's weekly recreation ride on Saturday. He's ridden in temperatures as cold as minus 13 in Massachusetts, but that was years ago.

"Today was as cold as even I'm going to put up with," Knowlton said Saturday. "Last weekend, we had winds probably 20 miles per hour. It felt like dry ice. If you were exposed to that very long, you would probably get frostbitten."

While Knowlton uses a trainer to work out indoors during the week, he likes to get outside at least on weekends in the winter. Even in cold weather and rain, he'll try to get in 24-25 miles, just to keep in shape for spring and summer rides that average 50 miles.

"It takes a long time to get the fitness level up before you can ride that far," Knowlton said. "You hate to lose it because it's tough to work your way back up again."

Still, Knowlton prefers working out in temperatures in the 60s and 70s. He's looking forward to spring.

"I'm looking forward to just the end of this week," Knowlton said, laughing, "because the temperatures go up a little bit."

Contact Kim Grizzard at kgrizzard@reflector.com or (252) 329-9578.
Cold snap pushes up gas prices

By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector

Sunday, January 10, 2010

A 9-cent bump in local gas prices this week is a result of a worldwide cold snap and signs of economic improvement, according to a local economist and a travel expert.

Since Christmas, the price of a barrel of crude oil has jumped to $83, up $10, said Nicholas Rupp, an associate professor of economics at East Carolina University.

That translated into the average price of regular unleaded gas in Greenville rising from about $2.659 on Monday to $2.749 on Thursday.

Prices are increasing because oil speculators see a nearly two-week cold spell that has set record lows in United States and China is increasing the demand for heating fuel, said Tom Crosby, AAA Carolinas vice president of communications. When oil refineries produce heating fuel, they are manufacturing less gas and that raises prices.

Retailers are anticipating their gas purchase cost will increase and are raising their prices in anticipation, Crosby said.

"Gasoline prices reflect oil prices and oil prices reflect supply and demand factors," Rupp said. "It's not the gas station trying to rip them off or trying to gouge them. It reflects demand factors, and oil is a scarce commodity."

Even before the recent cold snap, improvements in the United States and Chinese economies were sparking increased fuel consumption, Rupp said. Increased demand results in price increases when a commodity like oil is a limited resource.

Gas prices have been increasing in 2009, Crosby said, noting a year ago the average statewide price of gas was $1.669.

"What I've seen is higher oil prices are reflecting the potential for economic growth," Rupp said. But if prices go too high too quickly, it could stymie that growth.

"It's like a cycle. If it stymies the growth, then people consume or demand less oil, and as the demand drops, the price will then drop," he said.

Rupp said he doesn't see this week's price jump hurting Greenville's economy.
"I think it will take a larger increase in gasoline and fuel prices before we see any noticeable effects of the Greenville economy," he said.

However, people will start thinking twice about weekend trips if prices creep to about $3 a gallon, Rupp said.

Crosby said he thinks there will be a price drop in the future.

‘There will be some push back because we have a ton of crude supply,’ he said.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or (252) 329-9570.
Eyes ahead: ECU plans for future with construction

Monday, January 11, 2010

A university not focused on continual improvement is certain to fall behind its peers. To remain competitive, a school must lure successful faculty, hire excellent staff and draw talented students to cultivate a challenging academic atmosphere conducive to exceptional research and service opportunities.

Without adequate facilities, however, a school will struggle to attract that type of personnel or student population. It is therefore exciting to see East Carolina University continually competitive in this regard, with construction projects under way that serve the long-term needs of the institution.

The return of East Carolina students last week provided a noticeable change in downtown Greenville, as it does with routine frequency. The presence of so many young adults breathes life into that part of the city, lending an energy and life absent when the university adjourns between semesters or for the summer.

The change that preceded the start of the Spring semester reminds the community that the university mirrors a living organism, one that needs care and attention to remain viable and active. It is true both with those involved with the school as students, instructors and staff, but also in the facilities serving those individuals’ academic, residential, recreational and athletic needs.

One need only look across the campus to see the tremendous change unfolding there. The overhaul of Scott Residence Hall, for instance, will provide vastly improved and expanded living conditions for the students assigned there. Pirate fans will enjoy the addition planned for Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium and the new softball field now under construction aside Clark-LeClair Stadium. And then there is the medical campus, where work has begun on the Family Medical Center, which will increase patient capacity at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, and on the much anticipated dental school.

The price of progress is significant. East Carolina
will spend millions on these projects, using funds provided by the state and through private donations. But each dollar represents an investment in the future of the university, providing stability and economic growth to this community and throughout the region.

Since its founding, East Carolina has been guided by ambitious dreams to rank among the most successful and important universities, to serve area residents and reflect the spirit of eastern North Carolina. The facility construction under way and planned for the future shows those aspirations have not wavered and should position East Carolina to remain competitive for years to come.

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Dorothy B. Sheerer

Dorothy "Dot" Bailor Sheerer, 92 of Wilmington, formerly of Port Royal and Camp Hill, Pa., died Sunday, Jan. 10, 2010, at Lower Cape Fear Hospice & LifeCare Center.

Dot was born Jan. 7, 1918, to the late Charles and Carrie Rodgers Bailor. She was a retired bookkeeper with Juniata County School System and an accomplished pianist. Dot moved to Wilmington in 2008 to be with family.

Surviving are daughters, Marilyn Sheerer and husband, Earl Goodman, of Greenville, Nancy Sheerer and partner, Sue Harley, of Mechanicsburg, Pa.; sons, Larry Sheerer and wife, Sally, Mt. Joy, Pa., Richard Sheerer and wife, Linda, of Leola, Pa.; seven grandchildren, Brian Perrin and partner, Marco Egoavil, Stephannie Perrin and husband, Steve Himmel, Todd Sheerer and wife, Elizabeth, Erin Sheerer and husband, Brett Kirkpatrick, Brandon Sheerer, Christopher Sheerer and Kelly Sheerer; great-grandson, Charles Herbert Sheerer; and great-granddaughter, Addie Bailor Himmel.

A celebration of Dot's life will be 10 a.m., Wednesday at Wilmington Burial and Cremation Service.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Hospice of your choice.

Please share memories and condolences at www.wilmingtonburialandcremation.com.

Arrangements by Wilmington Burial and Cremation Service, 1535 S 41st Street, Wilmington.
Near-campus apartment plan revives

An Alabama developer paid $6 million last week for three acres near N.C. State University, where it plans to build a private 10-story student apartment building and a parking deck.

The purchase by Capstone Development is the first sign of life on an $85 million project that has been delayed by the credit crunch since being approved by the Raleigh City Council in October 2008.

Called the Stanhope Center, the building would include 277 multifamily units and a six- to seven-story parking deck with 787 parking spaces south of Hillsborough Street in Raleigh.

Capstone declined to comment on the status of the project.

Capstone had originally planned to lease the property from the seller, Hillsborough Ventures.

The center is the first of three parcels that Capstone hopes to redevelop just south of Hillsborough between its intersections with Friendly Drive and Rosemary Street. The parking deck is to go on the south side of Stanhope Avenue.

More than 10 months lapsed between the time Capstone introduced the project and the City Council approved it in 2008. Capstone, which specializes in student housing, revised the project in an attempt to gain the support of city planners and nearby residents - some of whom still oppose it.

Although there are a number of private apartment complexes that market themselves to NCSU students, the Stanhope Center would offer students the ability to walk to campus.

NCSU officials have expressed support for the project, saying that it will be a key part of the revitalization of Hillsborough Street.

The city of Raleigh is in the midst of a $9.9 million Hillsborough Street renovation project that is scheduled to be complete in September. The project will add two roundabouts and spruce up the streetscape from Pullen Road to Gardner Street.

david.bracken@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4548
12 tips on paying for college in tough times
Princeton Review on how to save money, get the most from financial aid

By Kaiman A. Chany, Princeton Review Books

TODAY
updated 7:01 a.m. ET, Tues., Jan. 12, 2010

Getting admitted to your choice college is only half the battle; the other half is figuring out how to pay for it. The competition for resources can be stiff, especially in tough economic times. Princeton Review shares tips on planning so that you can take advantage of financial aid. The most important rule: Start early.

1. Start researching aid possibilities sooner rather than later. The competition for aid increases when the economy is weak. Those who plan ahead for the aid process will do much better than those who procrastinate and miss deadlines.

2. Take steps that improve your aid eligibility. For example if you have lost your job, you should avoid the temptation to spend any assets in your retirement plan. In addition to the likely early distribution penalties and additional income taxes, the higher income will reduce your aid eligibility.

3. Apply for financial aid no matter what your circumstances — flush or not. Applying by the priority deadlines, even if you think you won’t qualify, will help you if your finances take a turn for the worst. Some schools will only accept requests for reconsideration due to a decline in income from those students who filed for aid on time — even if they were turned down initially.

4. You should still not initially rule out any school as being too expensive. Many colleges — especially the private ones — have increased their aid budgets to attract applicants whose families are now more price resistant given the state of the economy. But have a back-up plan in case the aid is not enough to attend those pricier schools. Most likely this will mean also applying to a public institution in your home state and/or any school where the student can live at home instead of paying for room and board.

5. Pay less for a four-year degree. You can save on costs if the student attends a community college for two years and then transfers to a pricier school for his or her remaining two years. However, be sure that the college to which the student plans to transfer will accept the credits from the community college.

6. Encourage your student to take as many AP courses as possible and to prep well for AP exams. High scores on AP exams can save considerably on college tuition. Many colleges award course credits for them, which can reduce the amount you need to pay in tuition.

7. Apply strategically to colleges. If you exceed the school’s admission criteria, you are much more likely to get a better aid package than a marginal applicant. Be sure to prep for the standardized tests such as the SAT or ACT, so that the student is more desirable.
8. Be realistic about how much debt the student can incur, given the starting salaries for his or her probable major and career path.

9. If you have to borrow, pursue federal loans first and avoid having the student take on private loans at all costs.

10. If your circumstances have a taken a turn for the worst, request additional aid. But expect that the college may require considerable supporting documentation.

11. In addition to your aid planning, focus on planning for the various education tax benefits you can claim. After all, a dollar you can save on your taxes is worth the same as getting an additional dollar in grant or scholarship aid.

12. Don’t put tuition on a credit card. This debt is more expensive than ever, given the recent changes to interest rates and other fees that many card issuers are now charging. You also want to be sure you avoid maxing out on your borrowing limit, just in case you need to use the card to pay for an unexpected emergency.


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