

# SPORTS

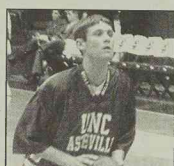
## Random the interruption, UNCA Banner writers answer all things serious and silly about sports



**Terrence Basso**  
Sports Reporter



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Sports Reporter



ED HICKLE/PHOTO EDITOR

*Who's your pick to win the NBA Championship? Will we see yet another Lakers win or a dark horse run from the (L) Eastern Conference? Nets, Celtics, Hornets, Magic, 76ers, Pistons, Pacers, Bucks, Lakers, Timberwolves, Blazers, Spurs, Suns, Magic, Jazz, Kings*

**Terrence Basso:** I think the Lakers still have at least one more ride in store. I can see them being dethroned by Sacramento if it comes to it, but outside of the Kings I don't think Shaq and company will be defeated this season. Sure they had a sub-par regular season but that doesn't mean all that much once the playoffs start. I think the Nets are going to be the East's representatives this year. You never know, they could surprise everyone and take down L.A. But I'm not counting on it.

**Jennifer Bacon:** I always like to pick for the underdog in most situations. In a perfect world, I would cheer on the Jazz or Magic, but this isn't a perfect world, so I'm going to have to say the Spurs. They have a better team than the Lakers do overall. We all know the Lakers are slowly going downhill.

*Who's the best coach in sports and why? Amateur, Collegiate, Professional, et al so long as he or she is currently coaching.*

**Basso:** Phil Jackson. The goat is really rocking, man.  
**Bacon:** Even if I wasn't a Yankee fan I think I'd still have to pick Joe Torre as the best coach out there. First of all, he's been able to handle winning in the New York sports climate and deal with all the distractions that come with it. He's been able to keep Steinbrenner in check for the most part during his tenure in the Big Apple and that is no small feat. And let's not forget that he coached the Yankees to four championships in the past

seven years. There's no reason he won't add another one this year. He also is a student of the game, which is important for any coach. Whether you love or hate the Yankees, you can't deny Torre's coaching ability.

*If UNCA teams weren't the Bulldogs, who or what would our mascot be and why?*

**Basso:** They'd have to get some strange name like minor league baseball teams have. I'll go with the Asheville Mountain Trolls. Hopefully the mascot outside of the gym wouldn't be anatomically correct in that case since that'd be pretty frightening.

**Bacon:** The Activists. Activists of what? I have no idea.

*It's the end of the year. Based on what you know, see and read, give us the report card grade (and maybe a little note) for the following UNCA teams:*

**Bacon:** men's basketball: A- Way to go guys!  
women's basketball: E for Effort  
men's soccer: B  
women's soccer: B  
baseball: A-  
volleyball: A-  
men's tennis: B  
women's tennis: B-  
track and field: B (same for Cross Country)

**Basso:** Men's Basketball: A. The tournament birth was more than anyone could have asked. I look forward to seeing them get back there next year.  
Women's Basketball: D. They had three wins towards the start of the season but after that they went on to lose their final 20 games. They did show a lot of heart and some of those losses were close so hopefully they'll improve next season.  
Men's Soccer: B. They finished up with a .500 conference record and

were 6-10-2 overall. They had a lot of freshmen coming in and can expect big things in the next few seasons.  
Women's Soccer: B-. They had a 9-8-3 record, but unfortunately went 2-4-0 in conference play, which hurt them.

**Baseball:** A. They're a game under .500 and 9-8 in conference play. They've had good pitching all year and the offense has come along well.

**Volleyball:** A. They made it to the Big South semi-finals and were 26-8 overall. I don't see any reason that they shouldn't get back there again next year.  
**Men's Tennis:** A. The team has played really well this season. It was the first winning season since 1986 and was nationally ranked for a while.

**Women's Tennis:** B. The women's side produced a winning season as well. They played well over the season and can hopefully get even better next year.  
**Track and Field:** N/A! Can't judge track in one lump grade because it's such an individual sport. One mass grade doesn't do individuals justice.

*Who wins at a game of H.O.R.S.E. The Bachelor or The Bachelorette? If you're not in the know... the last Bachelorette first runner up in the original Bachelor series worked as a cheerleader for the Miami Heat while the current Bachelor is a member of the Firestone family.*

**Bacon:** That girl had to learn something. I'm going to go with the

Bachelorette. If anything, she can flash him as he's shooting as a distraction. Win by any means possible!

**Basso:** I'd like to think that The Bachelorette saw enough basketball as a cheerleader to pick up a thing or two. Of course, it'd be the longest game of H.O.R.S.E. in history since FOX would take it into a reality series lasting 14 episodes.

*ESPN has a running dialogue between who's got the better playoff, the NHL or the NBA. So tell me, who has the better playoff?*

**Basso:** The NHL playoffs are better. They're more intense, more fun to watch and just provide a better show in general. Just because they're not as widely watched and analyzed as the NBA playoffs doesn't mean they're not as good. If they ever caught on to a larger audience I think people would realize how much better they are.

**Bacon:** I know more about basketball, but nothing is more fun than watching the best teams of a sport you know nothing about get into fights and beat the crap out of each other. For entertainment, hockey.



COURTESY OF MIKE GORE

*The Bulldog's baseball game against the Asheville Tourists took some fire for serving any alcohol. However, due to NCAA/Big South Conference rule, UNCA can't serve alcohol at any of its sporting events. Hence, the reason Bulldog Tourist game remained dry. Should UNCA be able to serve beer at sporting events? Why? Should this apply to basketball and volleyball games at Justice Gym?*

during his players' matches to pick up a racket and take care of business himself.

"It all depends on the match," he said. "If you can clearly see something that one of your players needs to be doing and he or she isn't doing, then it is frustrating. You just have to be patient because eventually they're going to figure it out." But the question is, can the former pro still compete with Division I men's tennis players or more importantly, can he still hang with guys on his own team?

"If you gave me two weeks to prepare and work on my game I'd like to say I'd be competitive at the top," said Hodges. "But, if you took me out there right now it wouldn't be good because my game has pretty much gone down the tubes since I started coaching."

**Life off the court**  
Although Hodges' number one priority is coaching his teams at UNCA, he still finds time to step away from the tennis world and pursue his other interests in life like going out, visiting his girlfriend in Virginia and watching and playing sports.

"I'm not too diverse," said Hodges. "I'm pretty much a jock. All I care about is sports. It's pretty sad." One sport that Hodges enjoys may come as a surprise to many of his players: surfing.  
"I'm a big-time surfer," he said. "I do that quite a bit and I've surfed in competitions, but I've never done well in any of them. Hawaii is the best place that I've ever surfed." Hodges said. "The waves in Cali-

fornia are so big that they're scary." Reality television has taken American culture by storm with successful shows such as "Survivor," "Joe Millionaire" and MTV's "The Real World." For Hodges, his fondness of reality television is somewhat biased because his cousin was the star of "Joe Millionaire," Evan Marriott.

"I love reality television," said Hodges. "There are some really good reality shows out there like "Joe Millionaire." But of course I'm a little biased. You can talk to anyone around and they may trash the show, but deep down they are watching it."  
And those of you who were wondering about what really happened on the show, forget about watching Entertainment Tonight or reading People Magazine. Coach Hodges has got all your answers after hanging out with his cousin this past Christmas.

"(Evan) signed a \$7 million confidentiality contract and I knew he didn't meet anybody on the show," said Hodges. "The truth is that he didn't like any of the girls at all. But, he had to act like he did."  
So what would Hodges do if he came across a million dollars?  
"I'd put it into my program," he said. "And I'd give it all my scholarships and then win the conference." "I want to be remembered as a coach that gave everything he could to his players," said Hodges. "It's not about me, it's about my players. It was everybody who played for me to enjoy all the benefits of being a UNCA student-athlete."

*What's your least favorite thing or pet peeve regarding sports?*  
**Basso:** The entire NFL gets under my skin. I think it needs some rethinking. It's impossible to tell who's the better team after such a long season and the games can drag on forever sometimes. Football's a great game but the NFL gets it all wrong. Then again, it could be worse. The NFL could have lasted and that would truly be a sad happening in the sports world.  
**Bacon:** Parents who push their kids too far. Like the alcoholic, overweight fathers who go to their 6-year-old son's tee-ball games and yell at the kids for getting out at first. Or mothers who enroll their daughters in ballet and dance and then make sure that they are cheerleaders later on. What if those kids wanted to be artists? Those same parents would laugh in their kids' faces if they came home saying "Dad, I quit football so I could be in the school play!"

*Best "sport" activity to do on the UNCA quad during a summer day?*  
**Basso:** The best thing to do on the quad is to go out there with a baseball and have a long game of catch. One of the best ways to kill a day

summer afternoon is throwing a baseball back and forth for an hour or two.

**Bacon:** I can honestly say that I have never spent more time on the quad than it takes to walk to class. I guess I'd have to say watching dogs play fetch, but that is only "sporty" for the dogs.



JASON MCGILLIS/SPORTS EDITOR

**Name Association**  
**NFL draft**  
**Bacon:** The most boring two days of television besides a Brady Bunch Marathon on TVLand. Donate some of that excessive amount of money you're getting to us broke college kids. We need it a heck of a lot more than you do.  
**Basso:** What a Dallas Cowboy has before he goes for a drive.

**Detroit Tigers**  
**Bacon:** Parents who make more humerus than the Tigers have total runs. That kind of a start takes something special.  
**Bacon:** Cecil Fielder. The man got Babe Ruth and Baby Ruth confused a few too many times I looked like.

**Tobacco Road**  
**Bacon:** North Carolina's perennial powerhouse of basketball.  
**Basso:** That'd probably be a little hard to drive on.

**Final Exams**  
**Basso:** These are the times that cry men's souls.  
**Bacon:** A reason to celebrate when they're over.

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It's tough to be a fan of a team that loses all of the time or blows the game after you thought they had it in the bag, but loyal fans stuck by the Bulls through all the losing seasons and are now proud they did. Up until a few years ago, you'd get made fun of for being a Bulls fan. (and I still do) but now their waiting list for season tickets is massive, and if you do get a hold of tickets they aren't anything close to cheap. There is a strange feeling that comes over you in Raymond James Stadium that is difficult to explain. Yes, it's only football, but it's the most incredible feeling when 80,000 people are united. It makes me happy.

Why am I writing about a Super Bowl that took place almost a year ago, you ask?

This is actually my last chance to write as a reporter for the Blue Banner and I couldn't possibly live with myself knowing I was a sports reporter and never even wrote about my favorite team — the Buccaneers.

So I took this moment to do so. Most as a reporter for the Blue Banner will be awesome if (though it's true) the Bulls are not going to be National Champs for too much longer. Drafts are happening now, and come August, it's anyone's game again.  
Living in Asheville, I haven't been able to share my excitement with many people and now I have done just that — before it is all over with.

### Hodges

California where he had a bedroom, apartment, cousin, Evan Millionaire. It's a great time for me. When opportunity opened up for me, I was nervous and I don't want to



Coach Hodges working in his office. ALAN AMBROSE/ONLINE EDITOR

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history and guided the women's team to a win total three times higher than last year's.

"I couldn't be happier with where both my programs are right now," said Hodges. "The men's team last year was 6-14 and this year the same team went 14-5. On the women's side, we more than tripled our win total from last year."

In addition to having the best season in school history, Hodges' men's squad also had the first national ranking in school history as well. "This season (men's) was tremendous," said Hodges. "We surpassed all expectations and a lot of our teams are looking at us as a team that's going to be better and better every year and hopefully compete for a conference championship."

The head coach also expects big things from his women's team as well next year.

"This year was a rebuilding year and seven wins (this year) compared to two wins (last year) is definitely moving in the right direction. We're going to get better and better and we'll definitely have a winning season next year."

Although many would believe that the team's impressive turn-around was a result of Hodges' coaching, he's quick to point out that there are many other important reasons. "I give a lot of credit to my assistant coach, Rob Light," said Hodges. "He's done a great job with the team. He's come in and drilled all the kids on the court." Another significant factor in both teams' success this year was the leadership of two seniors, men's player Alan Ambrose and women's team member Ashley Jones.

"You have to give credit to your seniors and they did their part for making this team get better and better each day," said Hodges. "Alan Ambrose did an excellent job and

he's going to be missed greatly. It was almost like having another coach out there, that's how mature he is. Ashley Jones on the women's side has been through it all. She had an excellent season and she was a great leader."

Success so early in Hodges' coaching career hasn't been as easy as his results have demonstrated, especially since he recently made the jump from college tennis player to Division I college coach.

"It's a big transition," he said. "I like to think I'm a players' coach. I kind of gear my coaching style towards the players because it's all like the student-athlete. When my players graduate and look back on the program, I want them to say 'I got a lot better, I learned a lot about myself and if I could do it all over, I'd do it in a heartbeat.'"

So far his coaching style has brought success and stability to both the student-athlete. When he's seen four different coaches in the last four years. What was once a job that had an average life expectancy of one year now has a coach that plans on staying for many years to come.

"I'm going to provide some stability here," said Hodges. "I don't plan on leaving. My goal is to realistically be able to honestly say that we can compete for a conference championship year-in and year-out."

In the meantime, Hodges' desire to succeed as a coach still collides with his desire to succeed and compete as a player. Sometimes, the UNC-W. student still gets the urge