



Photo courtesy of Cole Regan

Sophomore mascot Cole Regan has to muster up enough energy each game to get the fans up and on their feet, even when they are few and far between.

Cole Regan, man behind the mask of Rocky the mascot

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While the mystery and intrigue may not be on par with the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa, for years, casual and diehard sports fans alike have pondered the same question.

Whether it's the Phillie Phanatic, the Stanford Tree or UNC Asheville's very own Rocky, just who is the person under the suit jumping, dancing and strutting around the sidelines all in the name of team spirit?

"When I was a freshman, only a handful of people knew, but this year, all of my RA's found out at a training session we had. I'm sure there's about a 100 people that know now," said sophomore Cole Regan who is in his second year of serving as the mascot Rocky.

Regan said he never tried to hide his cartoonish alter ego,

rather he hoped by disclosing his identity it may help ease people who were naturally hesitant, and in some cases, afraid of mascots.

"I never really wanted to keep it a mystery because I know some people have a fear of mascots and who's inside them. By telling them who the person is, it makes them a bit more comfortable," he said.

Regan brings with him some experience from his younger days. Although his high school didn't have a mascot, he said he got his first taste of the job during middle school. When he came to UNCA, the choice to don the Rocky suit was an easy one to make but almost did not happen.

"Back in September (2010) they held tryouts for the position. I signed up, but actually forgot about it and missed the date. I got a message later that

said nobody else had showed up for tryouts so the job was mine. I signed up for two games at first, then added another four and eventually signed up for almost every game that season," Regan said.

As you can imagine for any job that requires putting on a giant bulldog head and playfully interacting with hundreds of fans at sporting events, flamboyance is a prerequisite. Those without creative imagination and energy to spare need not apply.

"You really have to be very energetic," Regan said. "Having an explosive energy helps make you look more goofy and more entertaining. You also need to have skill in interacting with the crowds."

Regan said the most rewarding part of his role was getting the fans fired up and on their feet, whether they are part of

the UNCA faithful or just another face in the crowd.

"The best part would be getting an entire home crowd cheering, similar to what I was doing for the Carolina game. Other times, like at the NCAA tournament last year, our fans were scattered all over the Dayton Arena, but I still got some other fans to cheer us on."

You might think all that animated cheerleading underneath a heavy suit with little to no ventilation would make a brisk autumn night seem like a muggy summer afternoon. According to Regan, you would be right.

"It gets very hot in there," said Regan. "There is a built-in fan on the top of the head, but it does not have a battery for it. The rest of the suit is very thick, but is also very worn down. Staying cool is the biggest challenge."

Currently, the mascot position is voluntary, with no fixed time period a person must commit to. Athletic competitions are also not the only opportunity to serve as mascot, as Rocky makes appearances at other university events throughout the year.

Regan said he's enjoyed his tenure as Rocky so far and has a full workload on his plate this year and hopefully next year as well.

"I have a lot of the men's and women's basketball games to mascot for this season, and I'll get the NCAA tournament games if either team makes it that far. I still would like to do it next year, and I'm thinking that I will."

Anyone interested in volunteering as mascot, please contact Erin Spence, UNCA director of corporate partnerships and marketing.