

FEATURES

'Sweet Carolines' — hostesses, not bait

by Gregory Clay

If you have ever noticed the pages near the back of a football program, you will find a picture of fourteen attractive ladies smiling straight at you. But wait, who are these ladies and what are women doing in a college football magazine? Well, if you don't already know, they are the "sweethearts" of UNC football, called the "Sweet Carolines."

Now look a bit closer and you will see four "fine" Black ladies in the picture. They are Vivian Lucas, Denise Crisp, Rita Todd and Amy Mittman. And now, believe it or not, we can go inside this strictly volunteer organization and learn firsthand what the girls think about themselves and the group.

To become a "Sweet Caroline", a young lady must submit an application and have an interview at the Sports Information

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Office. She is later notified by phone as to whether or not she has been selected.

"It gives me something to do and I like meeting people. Also, I enjoy meeting recruits because I keep up with high school football and I've learned a lot about football from talking to the players," notes Rita, a sophomore zoology major from Wilmington.

The "Sweet Carolines" meet and learn about these prospective football players on fall football Saturdays. Vivian, a senior psychology major from Louisburg elaborates, "We would go to upstairs Chase and have a reception-type meeting with recruits and their parents. It's like being a hostess and you have to enjoy carrying on conversations with them."

Denise, a sophomore psychology major from Morganton comments, "I talk to the players about their positions, their high schools, the colleges they're interested in, their horoscopes, and things like that. I really enjoy talking to their parents because I have more things in common with them and it relieves the monotony of speaking about the same things with the football players."

The "Sweet Carolines" try to present a friendly and pleasant atmosphere for the football players. "The recruits sometimes say this must be a very friendly university with all this intermingling between Blacks and whites," says Amy, a fourth year pharmacy student from Mount Airy.

But as far as advantages and rewards



Hostesses or bait? (from left to right) Rita Todd, Denise Crisp, and Amy Mittman. Not pictured is Vivian Lucas.

for being "Sweet Carolines" are concerned the girls don't seem to have many. They are assured of going to at least one away game during the football season with the opportunity of taking guests. They also get passes to football games at home.

Any organization has a reputation or a public image and the "Sweet Carolines"

are no exception, often drawing criticism as "human bait" used to reel in choice recruits. "I refuse to be cast in that category," Vivian says. "I resent being known in that manner. I'm supposed to be an instrument to persuade a player to come here, but personally I define my role as a "Sweet Caroline" as an advisor concerning the academic and social environment at UNC."

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Rita adds, "The biggest problem I anticipated concerning "Sweet Carolines" was that the public would think I was going out with the recruits, which isn't so. Yet, sometimes the "Sweet Carolines" run into undesirable situations, not with the general public, but with the coaches. Amy explains, "The coaches sometimes tell us to try to get to see the best players

as much as possible. The coaches point them out and give us their profiles so we can gather around them. Nine times out of ten the best player is Black and he already has six or seven white girls around him."

Denise has the impression "that coaches want us to tell football recruits that Carolina academics are no problem and football is first. I don't know whether the coaches consider a football player's academic ability," she says.

"Also I have the impression from talking to the coaches that they expect us to be more actively involved on a deep social level with the players. I disagree with this idea, so I don't do it."

One big problem about the group, Amy notes, is that "because so many Blacks are recruited, there should be more Black

girls to greet them," she says.

"Also many times the recruits bring their girlfriends and you have to talk to both of them instead of just him. So if you appear to talk to only him, his girlfriend may become disturbed."

What do the football players think about the "Sweet Carolines?" Ken Mack, a sophomore strong safety from Goldsboro, says, "All schools have a 'Sweet Caroline' type organization. Clemson, for instance,

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has the 'Bengal Babes' and other schools have girls present to lure players to a particular school. But the 'Sweet Carolines' did not approach me in that manner."

Middle guard Dave Simmons, a sophomore from Goldsboro, contends "The 'Sweet Carolines' didn't affect my decision in coming here at all. All schools that I visited had their girls such as at Tennessee where they are called 'Volerettes.' I've never heard of a player coming to a school because of the girls."

Mack adds, "If a recruit came to UNC because of a 'Sweet Caroline', he'd be crazy to let her be the biggest factor in his decision. Chances are he'll never see her again. There are other factors such as academics, playing time, the dormitories, and other things he must consider."

"To the average football player, if he has his head straight," says Simmons, "those girls won't make any difference where he goes. But, I do think the 'Sweet Carolines' should be around the football players more than they are. It makes you feel good to have someone talking to you to make you comfortable. They really don't do that much as compared to other schools."

"I'm sure the public sees them in a negative way such as to lure the recruits here," says Mack, "but that is contrary to what they really do."

And like the other Black members of the "Sweet Carolines," Vivian Lucas makes the point "that the 'Sweet Carolines' do not want to be a big factor in drawing recruits. The players should come because of the quality of the school and because they want a good education."

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