

# Elon spirit leaders prepare new squad for stadium opening

**Becca Lestner**

*Reporter*

As the Elon football team gears up for its season home opener, the Phoenix cheerleading squad has been preparing for a new start of its own, adding members and material to the line-up this season. Its mission is to bring Elon fans to their feet and show off their pride.

"The biggest problem we have had here is spirit," Sandra Bays, assistant coach, said. "We are hoping this stadium will increase school spirit, which makes our job easier."

Elon's cheerleading squad does not shy away from a challenge, according to Bays. She and head coach Susan Turner have recruited heavily for the squads, adding members into September.

"We are a new team," Bays said. "We have a lot of young members." Nine males and seven females make up the coed team, while there are eight members on the all-female squad and nine members on the dance team.

Both the coed cheerleading squad and the dance team attended an instructional camp held by the National Cheerleading Association and the National Dance Association. The weekend-long retreat gave the athletes a chance to compete among other top university squads and gain valuable hands-on experience. Turner said about 35 teams attended the event.

"The exposure was both necessary and rewarding," Bays said. "Both teams got a bid to nationals this year. This is the first time in Elon history."

In addition to the bid, the coed team received the most improved squad award. The dance team and mascot were also recognized for their excellence. Christine Fego, a member of the dance team, was named as a collegiate All-American.

The Phoenix mascot, known as "the bird" was rewarded as an All-American and best-all-around mascot.

In order to prepare for the in-

augural opener on Elon soil, the squad has brought pride to the forefront. Team captain Andy Linn said that the opener on Elon's own field is "just like a breath of fresh air." Linn is one of the few returning seniors on the team.

Bays insists the squad increase its level of intensity each year. "We are always learning new material so it doesn't get boring," she said. Routines for the season include more combination stunts as well as pyramids.

"We are trying to get a variety of pyramids, basket tosses and getting stunting skills equal," new member Reed LaPlante said. With no prior cheering experience, LaPlante spent his summer working with experienced cheerleaders and reading team materials.

New attitudes have also formed. The teams' members dedicate themselves to increasing the level of intensity inside the stadium. "We are a lot more am-

bitious," Linn said. "It's all a lot more positive."

Internal pride has also increased. "I am hoping now that the stadium is here that school spirit will increase," sophomore Lindsey Bradley said. "I am really looking forward to running out with the team and performing in front of my whole school."

Turner shared in the pride. "It's an honor to be a part of it and to be on the sidelines," she said.

Many members, being new, have been taught from scratch. The addition of male members has allowed the squad to experiment with new material. "We are becoming elite," said Bradley.

The season begins today and so does the climb toward greater recognition and performance.

The team has no intention of slowing down. "These team members put a great deal of heart and dedication into everything," Bays said. "It's a full-time job."



Several Elon cheerleaders work hard to perfect each of their stunts at a practice before the stadium opening. Erik Birgerson and Lauren Bradley (left) perform a chair extension. Reed LaPlante and Michele Simmonds (center) perform a full extension. Andy Linn and Lindsey Bradley (right) perform a stunt called an awesome.

Other performers: The Elon dance team will be performing alongside The Fire of the Carolinas and will be highlighted in the pre-show and half-time events. Elon's all-female team will cheer and stunt on the sidelines throughout the duration of the game.

## Tram driver gives the inside scoop on transportation

Rhodes Stadium seats more than 8,000 fans. Rhodes Stadium has 55,000 cubic yards of concrete and more bricks than a WNBA championship. Rhodes Stadium has zero stu-

dent parking lots.

Only people deemed important are allowed to park in the sole new VIP parking lot, located between the stadium and Latham Field. The VIP lot will most likely appease boosters and highly-regarded alumni.

As for students, the stadium's planning board instead elected to utilize the school's parking lots. Fans can then either trek to the stadium or stumble aboard a famous Elon shuttle bus.

The university is a haven for shuttles; Elon boasts a large family of public transportation vehicles, including a tram, a Cushman and the new kid on the block, the Elon Express.

This semester marks

the third year Edgar Somers will be driving the Danieleley Center tram. I talked to the seasoned veteran about the adventures of tailgating and tram driving.

JM: How many people do you think will be riding the tram Saturday?

ES: I guess a good amount (laughing). I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of 150-200.

JM: What is your route for Saturday?

ES: I don't know. I would say from Danieleley Center to up here (McMichael). It's not licensed to go on the street.

JM: How many hours will you be driving Saturday?

ES: I would guess somewhere between 8-12 hours.

JM: How fast can the tram go?

ES: Its top speed is 15 mph.

JM: Do you think you'll get any drunk people riding Saturday?

ES: (Laughing) I hope not. I don't need that, (students) falling off that thing.

JM: Will you pull over if they need to vomit?

ES: "I sure will. I'll give them an escort off. I don't want them messing up the tram.

JM: Do you get free tickets to the game, or do you have to drive the tram the whole time?

ES: Hopefully I might get a few.

JM: Do you think Elon will win Saturday, or is the team going to start off the season 0-3?

ES: I don't know. I hope they win.

JM: Who would win in a fight, the Phoenix or the Fightin' Christian?

ES: (Laughing) I'd say the Phoenix. I don't know why, I'm just rooting for him.

JM: So am I, baby. So am I.

*Compiled by Justin Mazzola, sports editor*

