

After 20 years, ECU-UNC series to resume in 2001



Former North Carolina tailback Kelvin Bryant (44) found the end zone six times the last time UNC and ECU met on the football field. The Tar Heels won 56-0.

By JONATHAN HART
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When the North Carolina and East Carolina football teams walked off the field at Kenan Stadium on Sept. 12, 1981, it seemed that it would be the last time the two schools would meet on the football field.

It wasn't because the Pirates had provided too difficult a test for Dick Crum's squad. Running back Kelvin Bryant scored six touchdowns, leading UNC to a 56-0 spanking of the Pirates. That day was indicative of the series, which finished 6-1-1 in favor of the Tar Heels.

Instead, the cancellation was a result of a 1978 Athletic Council decision that mandated that UNC's football and men's basketball teams would no longer play in-state, non-ACC schools.

Until now.

On Sept. 28, the two schools announced the resumption of their rivalry,

which dates back to 1972. Under the plan, the Pirates will face UNC on Oct. 6, 2001, at Kenan Stadium. Two years later, the Tar Heels will travel to Greenville to take on East Carolina for the first time ever at Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium.

According to UNC Director of Athletics John Swofford, there were two reasons the council made the decision to end the series after 1981.

"One (reason), and this is fairly unique as you look across the country," Swofford said, "is that we already have three in-state rivalries within the ACC, with Duke, State and Wake Forest.

"Secondly, we want to maintain, as much as we can, an intersectional scheduling philosophy that takes our teams to other parts of the country and brings teams from other parts of the country into Kenan Stadium."

Scheduling ECU, Swofford said, makes it difficult to bring quality national opponents into town, because it cuts down what little flexibility there is to fit in those national teams.

"In football, we only have three non-conference games that we can play," Swofford said. "When we play an additional in-state team, then we have four games out of an eleven game schedule that are against in-state teams. Of course, that then reduces an intersectional game that we might be able to schedule."

Why, then, would North Carolina agree to schedule the Pirates? If the Tar Heels want to position themselves as a national football power, why do they fill valuable slots on their schedule with two games against an in-state opponent?

The answer lies in Raleigh, where the General Assembly hoped to get both UNC

and N.C. State to agree to play East Carolina. Sen. Ed Warren, D-Pitt, even went so far as to introduce a bill that would require the two schools to play the Pirates every year, starting in 1999. While the bill never made it to a vote, the action helped spark the two sides to get together, Swofford said.

"The legislature had a great deal of interest in Carolina and N.C. State playing East Carolina," he said. "We had a lot of discussions about it within the University, and generally, after discussions with the chancellor and discussions with the Athletic Council, it was felt that it was in the University's best interest to re-establish that series.

"We're an athletic program, and most of our decisions are based on what's best athletically," Swofford said. "This is a decision that's been based on, quite frankly, broader implications."

Swofford said UNC and ECU agreeing on their own to resume the series created "a much healthier situation than the legislature getting into scheduling intercollegiate athletic events."

Scheduling a college football team is a difficult process, said Mike Hamrick, East Carolina's athletic director. Schedulers must make sure they have the correct balance of home and road games each season, and schedules are set years in advance.

The reason for the far-off date, Hamrick said, was that Swofford indicated to him that UNC would not have an open date until 2001. Despite that fact, Hamrick said the reaction he has received from Pirate fans has been posi-

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Swofford squashes rumors of UNC player-agent deals

By ADAM DAVIS
SPORTS EDITOR

After a three-day investigation into the appearance of four North Carolina football players' names on a list belonging to an agent, UNC Director of Athletics John Swofford said Tuesday he is satisfied that all the players involved are innocent.

"I think we've done about everything we can possibly do in terms of talking with the players themselves and any individuals whose names might have surfaced during the discussion, as well as the fact that the NCAA information from the West Coast does not implicate our players in doing anything wrong, and I think that's extremely important," he said.

Following a report in Saturday's Los Angeles Times that the names of tailback Leon Johnson, receiver Marcus Wall, cornerback Fuzzy Lee and safety Sean Boyd were on a list held by agent Robert Caron, Swofford, executive associate athletic director Dick Baddour and coach Mack Brown questioned the players.

Brown said Swofford and Baddour worked extensively Sunday and Monday, talking again with the players and with others who may have been involved.

"I think John Swofford and Dickie Baddour have done a tremendous job," Brown said. "I think they've done more than would've been done in most places across the country. There's no question it was a distraction for me. It was a distraction for our players, and it was a necessary distraction in both cases because we're not gonna break any rules around here."

Over the weekend, Swofford fired a pre-emptive strike of sorts by calling the NCAA. Usually, it's the NCAA contacting the school.

"It's a breath of fresh air, because institutions are supposed to monitor their own situations, and what John Swofford did took the bull by the horns," said Bill



DTH/JOHN WHITE

The Los Angeles Times reported Saturday that free safety Sean Boyd (28) and three other Tar Heels' names appeared on a list that belonged to an agent.

Saum, the NCAA investigator handling Caron's alleged dealings with athletes at Southern Cal.

"We reviewed the issues at hand and talked about who needed to be interviewed and what issues should be reviewed in those interviews."

Saum said that neither he nor any NCAA representative was present when

UNC officials interviewed the four players. But Saum didn't rule out speaking with the players in the future.

"At this point, I can't answer that question," he said when asked if he would contact the players. "The enforcement staff and the institution are continuing to monitor the situation. At this time, I have no plans to come to North Carolina."

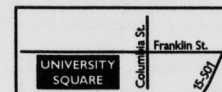
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