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The Daily Tar Heel

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Reason Rules

University administrators made the right call in canceling classes last week.

By all the wonders that be, the University finally joined the ranks of the rest of the logic-driven world and decided to do away with classes much of last week.

OK, the world hasn't become that wondrous in the past few days, but some changes have been made. After a mere 20 inches of snow, the University closed its doors on not just Tuesday but Wednesday and Thursday as well. It's rumored to be only the third time that UNC has closed since the Civil War.

This is an impressive record, but it doesn't seem to actually make much sense. A silly record isn't worth much when it endangers the lives and safety of so many faculty, staff and students.

By canceling classes, officials proved they had learned something from an earlier mistake. Despite the fact that on Jan. 18 buses trying to go down Airport Road slid rather than drove most of the way to the bottom, administrators decided that the roads weren't too terrible to attempt and classes remained on schedule.

But even if one did make it to campus safely, sidewalks were icy and dangerous - lawsuits waiting to happen with every fall.

Then administrators met their match. Although they thought the mere 6 inches Chapel Hill accumulated last Tuesday was puny, what were they going to say about the latest delivery?

By the time the blizzard of 2000 was over Tuesday morning, Orange County was under a cozy blanket of close to 20 inches of snow. Although a no-brainer, canceling classes was still a point for the administration.

But UNC didn't stop there. Officials also improved their methods of informing faculty, staff and students. If you were wondering whether classes were canceled, you could check UNC's Web site or call a special weather hotline. Still, using the already existing e-mail emergency notification system would have established beyond a shadow of a doubt that every UNC student or worker knew what was going on.

Last week, officials definitely stepped up and took control. By canceling classes the University showed that it isn't quantity but quality that makes a school great.

Fearing for the safety of faculty, staff and students is definitely a nobler concern than a minimal closings record. Good job, guys.

Courtside

The Department of Athletics should work harder to get more students seated in the lower level of the Smith Center.

Following North Carolina's emotional win over Maryland on Thursday night at the Smith Center, a relieved Bill Guthridge jokingly announced, "We may have more snow games."

However, despite numerous claims that even God roots for the Tar Heels, Guthridge and the boys in blue shouldn't sit back and pray for blizzards prior to home games.

The thing is, they shouldn't have to.

Something is blatantly wrong when the most storied college basketball program in the universe needs a freakish winter storm to get the best fans into the best seats.

Nobody fortunate enough to have been in the Smith Center can deny the impact the students - in their "relocated" student section - had on the Tar Heels in the second half.

For the first time in recent memory, thousands of loud, boisterous college students were close enough to the floor to spur on a Carolina club that hadn't played inspired ball since the Maui Invitational.

"It was a great atmosphere with the students courtside," Maryland head Coach Gary Williams said after the game.

"I even had a couple of people yelling at me, which hasn't happened here before."

UNC sophomore forward Jason Capel said: "We needed this. (The students) were loud, rowdy ... They rushed the floor. We needed that feeling again that everybody was behind us."

Well Jason, the students would love to give you guys that feeling every time you take the court. The problem is, it's mighty tough to have an impact on the game when most students are seated in the next zip code.

Currently, students receive approximately 5,000 tickets to home games, with only 1,300 located in the lower level.

That is an absurdly small number for an arena that seats more than 20,000.

Undeniably, the boosters with the great seats were instrumental in the construction of the facility, and they remain a huge component of the University's fiscal formula.

On the same note, it is very tough to ask a financially strapped athletic department to forfeit millions of dollars in donations.

However, for the good of the program, and for the enjoyment of the kids who only get four years at UNC, more students need to be in the lower level of the Smith Center.

Student Government Wannabe? Then Listen Up!

The Daily Tar Heel editorial board endorses candidates in all student races. The DTH will not consider endorsing any candidate who fails to fulfill all the requirements in the endorsement process, which might include an interview, a questionnaire, a platform or any combination of the three. Candidates should be aware that they need to be able to provide that information to the DTH at any time until Feb. 15. For more information, call Editorial Page Editor Scott Hicks at 962-0245.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Game Shows Need for Changes

It was nice to see things back to normal last week, at least as far as the basketball team is concerned. Thankfully, "normal" is a 12-point victory over a talented Maryland team then ranked 21st in the nation.

In the wake of Thursday's victory, students, players and journalists alike have been quick to credit the student cheering sections with the victory, although Brendan Haywood's 24 points must certainly have had something to do with it.

Nonetheless, it's now or never for the effort to improve the Smith Center atmosphere.



BRANDON BRISCOE VOICE OF REASON

Put Up ...

... or shut up. Having tasted the good life - the captain's chairs, the courtside seating, the chance to heckle the opposing coach - students want more of it. While bringing students closer to the action would certainly improve the atmosphere, financial donations have won as many games for the program as obnoxious fans.

The Smith Center ticket office reports that if students take all of their allotted tickets, the only other folks in the stadium have season tickets or are guests (i.e., recruits, the opposition's fans, etc.)

At \$312, season tickets don't come cheap, and the only folks eligible to purchase them are faculty/staff members and donors to the Educational Foundation.

Although foundation officials could not be reached for comment, a survey of the foundation's Web site suggests that donors must give at least \$50,000 to be eligible to purchase season tickets.

Other donors have access to unwanted tickets on a per-game basis, but many folks at the games have given a large, personal donation.

Clearly, that shows as much spirit as painting one's chest blue and white and going nuts in the stands.

Personal donations are unquestionably a gift of loyalty and spirit.

Corporate donations are entirely different.

We don't owe as much to the law firm that made a donation from its pocket change so the partners and big-wig clients can enjoy the

games. Students should be accommodated at their cost.

Down in Front

Art Chansky, writing for Goheels.com, suggested a plausible way to make everyone happy. He called for an aptly named "pit" area of bleachers in the place of the existing first few rows.

The bleachers, he says, would create more lower-level student seating and would be below the view of the fans in the first row of permanent seats. The pit could stretch around three sides of the court, as in Carmichael Auditorium, allowing the generous donors to keep their cushioned seats.

Of course, it would probably cost money to install bleachers, but students wouldn't mind picking up this tab - especially if we can get cushioned bleachers.

Give Unto Duke ...

... what is Duke's. The Dookies have dibs on the cheering method of hopping up and down in their own bleachers. We ought not to imitate them, imitation being the highest form of flattery. While it was an impressive spectacle Thursday, the practice screamed "Duke," not "Carolina."

We have our own traditions, and we can always start new ones. But let's be original - no need to give the Dookies any credit.

We've Got Spirit

Many a valiant Tar Heel fan has dreamed of storming the court, only to realize with frustration that the Carolina crowd is too tame.

And while an ESPN commentator wisely suggested that we should save such excitement for "when it counts," Thursday's mob scene proved that we at least have the requisite spirit.

Stay for Dessert

Better than flooding the court was singing the alma mater after the game. Every team for which the band plays should huddle with the spectators to sing after every game, in both victory and defeat.

Of course the crowd need not always rush onto the court, but true fans with any pride ought to remain in their seats long enough to sing. After all, the wine-and-cheesers, who left with 2 minutes to play, have the doors out of the Smith Center blocked anyway.

Singing the alma mater as a group is a reminder of why we're here and what the collegiate athletics are all about. It is a reality check of sorts, and it's a shame that players and halfhearted fans leave before singing it.

Supporting Cast

One group always present for "Hark the Sound" is the cheerleaders, who have done a superb job this year. Indeed, for once the team was able to match them in entertainment value.

The latest addition to their repertoire is spelling "Carolina" - the gals with their pompoms, the guys in a well choreographed scramble on the floor. If only the players would dive on the court like that.

The band has done a fine job as well - they play an enjoyable selection of songs, even if "Carry On, My Wayward Son" is getting old. And along with the players, the Blues Brothers were back in the groove Thursday. That's a tradition we can proudly call our own.

Now if only we could get the old uniforms back.

Brandon Briscoe is a junior journalism and mass communication major from New Orleans, La. Send him your tips and Duke tickets at brandon_briscoe@unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Despite Pulling Bill, Students Should Vote On Joining USSA

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to comment on the Jan. 21 article discussing the validity of a congressional referendum allowing students to vote on raising fees to join the United States Students Association.

I would like to make clear that my recommendation that Student Congress Speaker Mark Kleinschmidt remove the referendum from the ballot in no way reflects on my feelings toward USSA.

The Student Code, which binds all actions of student government, clearly states that a two-thirds majority is needed to place any constitutionally altering referendum on the ballot. With a vote of 12-10, the bill simply did not pass.

Once this fact was brought to me on the afternoon of Jan. 20, I proceeded to bring it to the attention of the speaker in the most expedient way possible. He was notified within 30 minutes of this discovery, and he

subsequently directed the Elections Board to remove the item from the ballot.

If I had not brought forth this discrepancy, I would have been acting in direct violation of my sworn oath ... I would have let the student body down.

I would also like to comment on my feelings toward USSA. While some might disagree with me, I think that USSA is a good organization and worthy of consideration.

If given all their options, I feel that students should have the right to voice their opinion on joining USSA, whether by directing Congress to appropriate \$1,500 or by voting to raise student fees \$3 per student.

I do believe students should have their say. However, I do not believe that students should be given a tainted ballot - one whose validity would be questioned for years to come.

By disallowing an illegal bill, we did what was best for the student body. After all, that is what we swore to do.

Nic Heinke Student Body President

White Student's Quip Explains Low Turnout At MLK Jr. Lecture

TO THE EDITOR:

As I sat in Memorial Hall for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Lecture on Jan. 20, I wondered to myself why so few people turned out to hear Julian Bond deliver his address.

Was it too cold? Was there not enough publicity? Was it competing with a more attractive event? The question lingered; two days passed before I finally found the answer.

Saturday afternoon my wife and I attended the UNC v. Florida State men's basketball game.

When the first four participants in the half-time dunk contest, all of whom were black, walked onto the court and began warming up, a white student behind me quipped, "What is this... the All-Criminal Team?"

Ah ha, it was ignorance.

Malcolm Logan Graduate Student School of Law and Kenan-Flagler Business School



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