

Weighing the Options

By JAMES GIZA

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Ah, the life of a football recruit. Must be nice.

All that attention. College coaches from all over practically knocking your door down to get you to sign that piece of paper that says you'll bless them with your presence.

Traveling around the country on official visits to schools that treat you like royalty when you get there.

National television exposure and big time attention from pro scouts soon to come your way.

Must be nice.

"It's fun at first, and it's a situation that a lot of people would love to be in," North Carolina freshman tailback Brandon Russell said. "But at the same time, it has its negative side."

Russell's teammate, UNC sophomore wide-out Bosley Allen, certainly knows what Russell is talking about.

When he first started getting calls from college coaches after his junior season, Allen was riding high.

"I was feeling like I was important at first because you're just playing football," said Allen, who was also recruited by Florida State, Florida, Miami, Tennessee, Texas and Michigan. "You get a lot of hometown attention, but as far as getting calls from major colleges — people with national championships under their belts — it's just amazing. It's a nice feeling."

But soon Allen realized, as many recruits inevitably do, that his phone was going to be ringing more than a quarterback's ears after he gets

decked by Julius Peppers.

"At times, I had phone calls up to 1:30 at night," Allen said. "You have three-way and people are on the other line wanting to talk to you, and you tell them you're on the phone with other coaches, and they're like, 'Naw, you don't need to be on the phone with him.' It's funny at times, but it gets frustrating."

"At first it was just fun," said UNC redshirt freshman offensive tackle Jupiter Wilson, who was recruited by all the ACC schools, plus Michigan State, Nebraska, Purdue and Virginia Tech.

"All my friends would see the coaches come to school and say, 'Hey, that's Coach Torbush' or 'That's Coach Bowden' or whoever. And then after a while, when you see those guys, and you're talking to them on a daily basis, it can be a little bit of a bother."

OK, so maybe the late-night phone calls and constant attention can get annoying.

But once a recruit narrows his choices down and starts checking out the schools in person,

it's got to make up for the sleep deprivation, stiff neck and coach-fatigue.

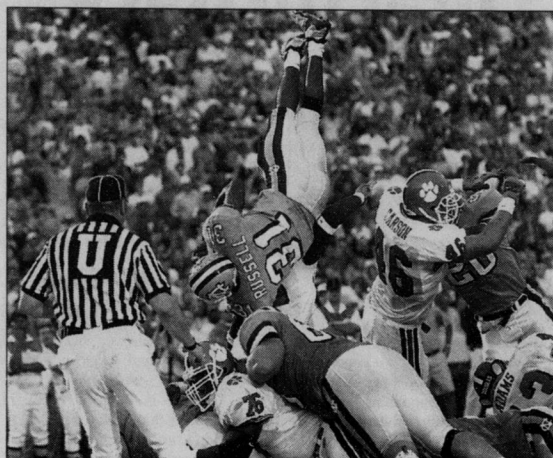
Kind of. But it sure doesn't make the process any easier when every school paints itself as heaven on earth.

"You only see the real, real good parts about the school," Russell said. "When I first went out to Stanford I was like, 'Man, I could go here.' And then I came to North Carolina and I was like, 'Man, I like it here, too.' And then I went to Notre Dame, and it was the same way."

"I only took three official visits, and after coming home from those three

"You get a lot of hometown attention, but as far as getting calls from major colleges ... it's just amazing."

BOSLEY ALLEN
UNC wide receiver



DTH/MIKE MESSIER

UNC tailback Brandon Russell (31) visited three schools — North Carolina, Notre Dame and Stanford — while choosing between scholarship offers.

official visits, I was totally confused. I didn't know what I wanted to do."

That's when it can hit a recruit: stress.

Something that started off so exciting has suddenly become a major source of angst.

So that's also when a recruit has to step back, be cool and not worry about it.

"It can get overwhelming if you let it," UNC redshirt freshman safety Dexter Reid said. "But if you keep it all under control and keep your priorities straight and know what you want to do — don't be influenced by anybody else, your parents or other coaches, then you'll be OK."

To make sure he stayed on point, Reid, who received recruiting overtures from Maryland, Michigan, Penn State, Virginia, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin, narrowed his choices down to three schools and then made a list of pros and cons for each.

Like all college students, recruits often look for a school with a good academic reputation and a comfortable social atmosphere.

But sometimes, it's the little things that can make a difference.

Allen points to a chance meeting with UNC offensive guard Cam Holland as a moment that was on his mind when he was making his final choice.

"I was coming back from a club one night, and Cam was like, 'We need you up here. I've seen film on you. I think you fit in the program,'" Allen said. "And that just stuck with me."

But in the end, no matter where a recruit finally decides to go, there's nothing like making that final decision, signing a letter of intent and putting an end to the chaos.

No more phone calls. No more visits. No more confusion.

"I felt good," Wilson said. "First, I was going to Carolina, the place I wanted to go to in the beginning when it started. And then just to be over with it and be done — UNC's happy, I'm happy. And it was all good after that."

Must be nice.

New Blue Blood

The North Carolina football team has received 11 verbal commitments from high school players. The athletes cannot officially sign with the Tar Heels until February.

Player	Pos.	Size	High School	Hometown
Antavis Barrino	DL	6-5, 260	Forest Hills	Marshville
Jason Brown	OL	6-4, 330	Northern Vance	Henderson
Brian Chacos	TE	6-5, 255	Darien	Darien, Conn.
Jason Crawford*	RB	6-3, 225	Parkdale	Forestville, Md.
Tommy Davis	LB	6-4, 225	Southern Wayne	Goldensboro
Jacques Dumas	TE/DE	6-9, 230	Asheboro	Asheboro
Chris Hawkins	WR/DB	6-0, 175	Kinston	Kinston
Drew Hunter	OL	6-8, 278	Ravenscroft	Raleigh
Jocque Lewis	RB	5-11, 185	Northeastern	Elizabeth City
Jeff Longhany	TE/LB	6-3, 238	Cape Fear	Fayetteville
Guy Whipper	DE/TE	6-6, 215	Havelock	Havelock

* signed last season, but playing at Fork Union Military Academy this year.



DTH/SEFTON IPOCK

Wide receiver Bosley Allen, a Bradenton, Fla., native, chose to attend North Carolina over Florida, Florida State, Miami, Michigan, Tennessee and Texas.



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