

Are you ready for some Football?

Saturday

3:27 p.m.
UNC vs. N.C. State

North Carolina quarterback Ronald Curry takes a knee with 28 seconds ticking away on the clock. The battle done, his fellow Tar Heels lift their voices in triumphant screams and race onto the field toward their band and their fans.

They sing, they laugh, they enjoy the 17-9 victory. And when the song has ended, they turn to the center of Carter-Finley Stadium, to N.C. State's defeated football team. Awkwardly, they stand for a few moments, but then, in a great wave, they fall to their knees and pray with the Wolfpack.

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3:32 p.m.
The Game's End

Greg Woofter is the first Tar Heel off the field. He walks with a man in North Carolina regalia and gestures with his helmet, shaking his hands and helmet back and forth.

Tight end Zach Hilton runs in seconds after Woofter reaches the field house. The 6-foot-7 Hilton beams, having caught the first two passes of his career in the game.

There are plenty of other smiles. Assistant head coach James Webster claps hard as he strides to the locker room. Senior wideout Kory Bailey uses his helmet to punctuate his feelings. He looks as if he'd like to cry. Center Adam Metts walks next to offensive lineman coach Robbie Caldwell, grinning ear to ear. But he stops, turns and hugs a teammate.

Finally, UNC's first-year head coach John Bunting makes his way to the field house. Under the blaring sounds of Lee Greenwood's "I'm Proud to Be an American," Bunting smiles, hugs and shakes hands with friends, players and staff.

Sunday

3:10 p.m.
Sports Information Office

Tucked away beneath the Dean Smith Center in the Sports Information Office is Kevin Best, assistant athletic communications director. He and five other UNC athletics officials and student assistants are compiling information from Saturday.

Best's task is to prepare information for Bunting's 5 p.m. teleconference. The process involves sorting through and updating player statistics, gathering newspaper clips, and preparing a list of reporters and questions for the conference. "It just takes time," Best says, as he sifts through statistics, circling numbers and highlighting names. Best also writes "Today's Game," one of six features in the program that he edits.

The phone rings. Best brushes aside the stacks of graphs, press releases and programs that have gathered on his desk to answer it. It's a reporter from The Chapel Hill News.

Best responds with quick "yes" or "no" answers. And as soon as the conversation ends, he is back to work. Best casually nods toward the phone. "Somebody has to coordinate and run (the press for football) - that's what I do," he says.

Monday

4:56 p.m.
ROTC Practice

The Army ROTC practice begins to wind down. Students walk away from the Naval Armory on South Columbia Street with a knowledge of what they need to do to improve their individual presentation. Presenting the colors and handling the arms with precision, finesse and fluidness is key.

As for the cadets' spirits, they are high in the Army ROTC, says Nate Williams, the leader of the presentation. "We always have a lot of patriotism," he says. "But when we see everyone else being patriotic and supporting us, it builds morale."

Tuesday

10:45 a.m.
Press Conference

It's 15 minutes before the Tuesday press conference. Reporters, joined by Bunting, are streaming into the Kenan Football Center.

Dressed casually in jeans and sweatshirts, 30 members of the press lug tripods, microphones and laptop computers into the John D. Swofford Auditorium. Papers are shuffled, notes are written, and reporters chat about the recent UNC wins.

Only moments later barrel-chested Bunting charges into the room, wearing his standard-issue Carolina blue UNC polo shirt. The walnut-sized Super Bowl ring on his right ring finger is a visual reminder of his storied history.

The reporters converge on the table where the coach sits and deposit a dozen or so tape recorders in front of him. The moderator announces the time for the next game and, like the herald of a king, informs them Bunting is now ready to speak.

Bunting gives a brief account of the N.C. State win. He says he is pleased and gives his expectations for the ECU game.

The reporters begin their questions all at once and gener-



DTH/SEFTON IPOCK

Co-captain Stuart Mintz leads the UNC Dance Team in a Wednesday night practice (above). Superintendent of Athletic Facilities Bobby Gales works with Rusty Nipper, Kevin Robinson and Ben Saunders to put a new goalpost in the ground at Kenan Stadium (below left). Members of the ECU class of '54 dance the night away at a Pirate Club pep rally held in the Durham Bulls Athletic park Friday night (below right). UNC football players practice Tuesday afternoon (bottom).



DTH/KATIE RIGGAN



DTH/JOSHUA GREER

ally defer to the most assertive voice.

Bunting breaks from his stoic pose only occasionally. At one point when a reporter mentions that the team has had "no serious injuries," he knocks his ring on the table for good luck.

4:45 p.m.
Football Practice

Defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta fakes a throw to a line of defensive backs spaced five yards apart. They're running backward, and with each fake of Tenuta's hand, they twist in unison and run in the direction the ball would have traveled.

As they run, they shout what to the casual observer sounds like gibberish, but occasionally one clearly yells, "Pass!" Once the four - UNC's starting secondary - reach the other side of the field, another line of four begins.

Tenuta, dressed in a gray Carolina T-shirt over a long-sleeved white shirt and shorts, is in charge of the entire defense, but is known for the magic he works in the secondary. Later, Tenuta will stand behind his defense and critique its performance on each play, but for now, he's working on his defensive backs' ability to follow the ball.

tested. Any deviation could result in spending Saturday in the stands.

The coach surveys the dancers. With a quick motion of his hand and a simple "out," three performers are sent to the side.

The remaining dancers swirl into frenzied motion. Beads of sweat glue stray hairs to foreheads. The dance ends with each girl frozen at attention, and they smile up at imaginary bleachers and fans. The coach looks over the lines of dancers and simply says, "Again."

Thursday

1 p.m.
Painting the Field

Five groundskeepers are fighting nature to keep the lines on the football field crisp bright blue and white.

They carry long pipes with hoses attached, several rumbling pumps push the paint through the hoses to the pipes, where it sprays out of the end.

After a full day's work all of the groundskeepers are wearing Carolina blue. "His shoes didn't come that color - it was the paint," says supervisor Mark Gaines, pointing out one of his co-workers wearing shoes the color of Papa Smurf.

Gaines says the repainting is painstaking. It takes the workers' total concentration to follow the old lines. But he says the work pays off. "The best part is when we watch them play."

6:15 p.m.
Marching Band Practice

Brilliant green AstroTurf blankets their feet while just across South Road the flags of the UNC colorguard paint the air in pink.

In fierce preparation for the upcoming game, 333 members of the Marching Tar Heels warm up in a semicircle around a drum major perched atop a ladder platform.

Marching in place, their feet rolling from heel to toe, they hold one eye on the waving arms of the drum major and the other on the music stand.

Director Jeffrey Fuchs barks commands from loudspeakers. "32, 16, back 16." The language is lost to the outsiders watching.

10:21 p.m.
With Linebacker David Thornton

"Yeah, it was a busy day," says North Carolina senior linebacker David Thornton, finally having walked through the door of his apartment.

Thornton started his day with an 8 a.m. breakfast at the football center. Thornton then headed into the weight room for a light workout for half an hour. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Wednesday

7:45 a.m.
Ticket Distribution

It's way too early for football, not to mention waiting in line at the Smith Center for ticket distribution. But most students weren't planning on having to wait. When Florida State was in town, there wasn't even a line at distribution. But it's different this time.

Hopes of getting the tickets and getting back fade quickly, as students pull up to find all the parking lots full.

7:45 p.m.
Dance Team Practice

Things get serious when UNC Dance Team coach Don Collins arrives.

He quickly places the 15-member team into two game formations, shuffling dancers around at random. The dancers must be on their toes. Here, the ability to adjust one's performance to on-the-spot changes in formation is



DTH/KIMBERLY CRAVEN

Archie Cheek, who works for Party Showcase, a local party supply provider, sets up tents for Tar Heel Town in Polk Place on Thursday afternoon.



DTH/JESSICA NEWFIELD

Thornton has two classes (at 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.), so he met with his coach after his workout to discuss what the mistakes he made in Wednesday's practice.

After class and a quick stop to pick up a bite to eat, Thornton presented himself for a 2:15 p.m. meeting and then walked with his teammates from the football center to the practice field next to Henry Stadium.

When practice was over, Thornton headed back upstairs to the dining area of the football center for the feast laid out for the post-practice meal. Ribs, collared greens, barbecue. "Healthy" food, Thornton calls it, being completely sincere.

That's probably because on his way from after hitting the books at the University's academic center, Thornton made a slight detour to Wendy's. "I had to get some late-night food," he says with a laugh.