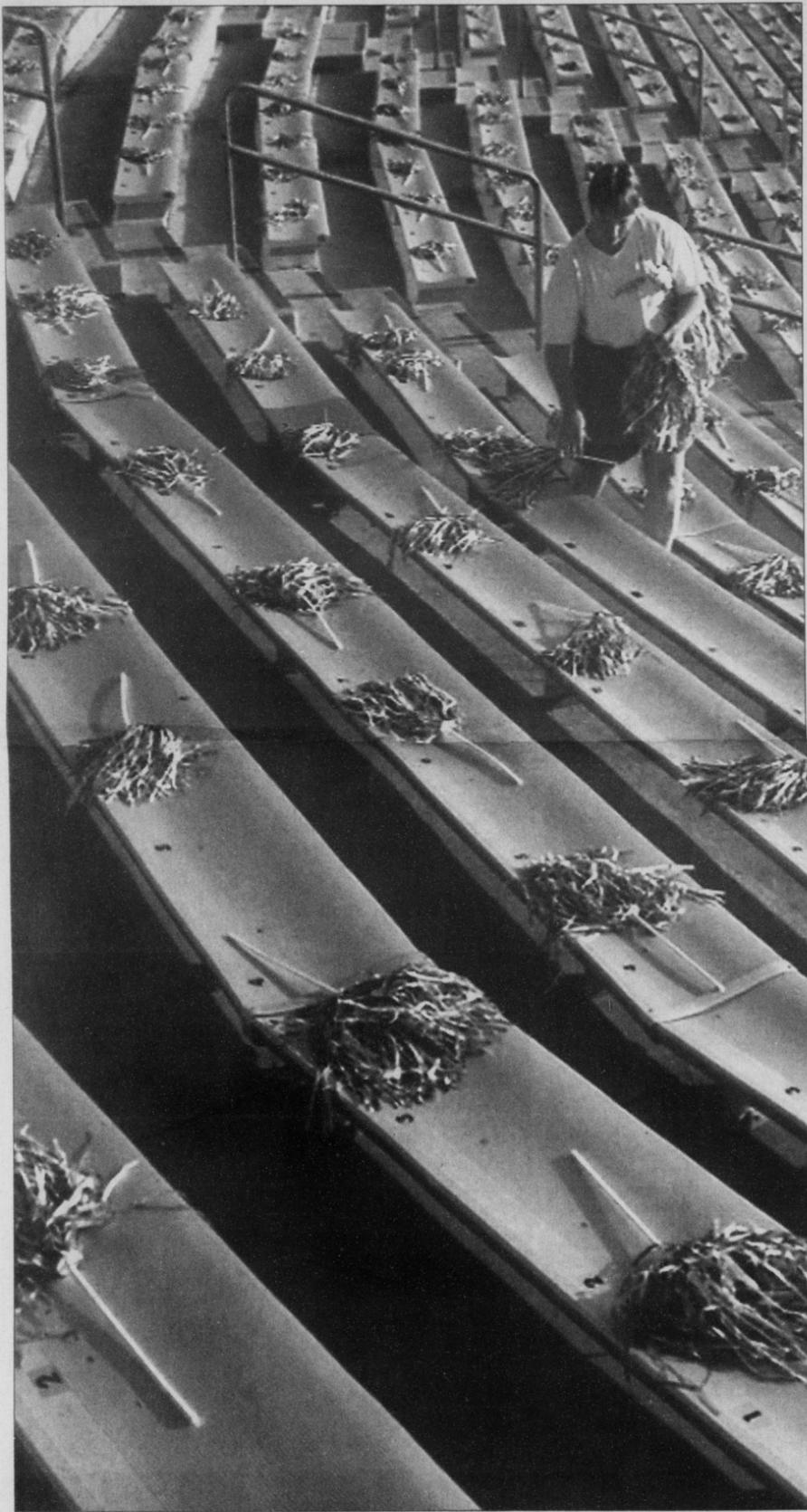




General utilities worker Mark Knowles begins painting at the tail end of the Tar Heels logo in the west end zone during Wednesday's field preparations (above). Pam Atkins covers the UNC section of Kenan Stadium with blue and white pompoms early Saturday morning before the football game (below). Dan Mishin, Jeff Stanton and Sean Markham watch football during a pregame barbecue at Kingswood Apartments (bottom left). Kathy Haelenda paints a Tar Heel on a child's cheek before the game at Tar Heel Town in Polk Place (bottom middle). The UNC Marching Tar Heels practice their formations in Kenan Stadium (bottom, third from left).



DTH/REBECCA O'DOHERTY

FOOTBALL

From Page 5

Friday

9:18 a.m.

Placing the Pompoms

Pam Atkins, clad in a gray UNC T-shirt, denim shorts and a miniature American flag pin, kicks a box stuffed with Carolina blue and white pompoms, sending it tumbling end over end down the steps of Kenan Stadium.

The box stops upside down at Row W. She tears open the box and shakes out a bundle of pompoms, sending confetti-sized pieces of plastic flying. Atkins then sidles between the bleachers, placing a pompom on every other seat of Section 120. Sections 115 through 119 are already a sea of Carolina blue and white.

Atkins, a resident of Graham, says the Sports Marketing Department asked her to help and that she is here before every home game laying out 9,000 pompoms in the student sections. The total was 25,000 before the department cut it back, but Atkins is optimistic that the number will increase again.

"It's great for the fans from other schools to see the wave of blue, and it lets the team know the fans are behind them," Atkins says. "The players have thanked me before and are always appreciative of the support, winning or losing."

Atkins squints her eyes against the bright sunlight reflected off the pale silver bleachers. She shuffles across Row X with four giant bundles of shakers under her arms. She's almost done with Section 120. Then it's on to Section 121.

10:15 a.m.

Woody's

Woody's Tar Heel Tavern & Grill Manager Tom Carey has been around the bar for a little more than an hour, bartender Tony Lopez, just 10 minutes. Both sit talking while they wait on the beer to arrive. It's time to stock up for the weekend's game crowd.

Carey expects to go through 25 to 30 bottles of liquor and 40 to 50 cases of beer. "We had one of the busiest days ever when we played Florida State," Carey says. "It should be jam-packed all day."

Carey says visiting fans will be served under one condition. "We'll serve them as long as they behave," he says.

On game day the staff will arrive early to open at 8 a.m.

"We serve breakfast with Bloody Marys, so people will get here early to get a seat for the day," Carey says.

It will be 45 minutes until Eric, the Anheuser Busch guy arrives. And with him is the weekend beer.

4 p.m.

Carolina Inn

The Carolina Inn is serving fresh-baked cookies with lemonade and iced tea in the foyer. It's a game weekend tradition.

Home and visiting team fans enjoy the snack while talking about the upcoming game. The friendly atmosphere belies the competitive spirit preceding the game.

Two hours later, guests will make their way to the courtyard, set with tables covered with white linen, where servers offer complimentary wine, varied French cheeses and succulent shishkebabs.

For the past 50 years, before UNC home games football fans have been going to the inn, where rooms sell out in hours, says Sara Gray, director of operations.

Gray, who has worked here for six years, knows many of the guests and greets them by name.

Some patrons request the same room each season, she says, and at least half of the 184 rooms go to the regular football revelers. "One guest wants the identical room he has stayed in for the past few decades," Gray says. "This gives him a view of his old fraternity and the path that he took to school when he was an undergrad here in the 1950s."

7:03 p.m.

At the Movies

The day before they hit the field for a football game, North Carolina's football team comes in two buses to Park Place Theatre in Morrisville to take a collective load off football.

Once inside the spacious lounge area, the players break off into groups – defensive and offensive line, etc. – and attend to their first line of business: the concession stand.

On the warm evening, nearly every player indulges in Minute Maid slurpees and popcorn.

The offensive lineman sit in sofas and chit chat, including

Jupiter Wilson, who says he is planning to see "Rush Hour 2." Word is most players are going to see the action film "Training Day."

They seem relaxed. Several – including running back Willie Parker and cornerback Michael Waddell – laugh and razz each other.

While in line, kicker Jeff Reed says, "I'm trying to see something funny, get in a relaxed mood."

After they get their goods, the team members split off into two side entrances to see their respective films.

On this night, it's not about football, it's about flicks.

11:25 p.m.

Mascot

Rameses, the UNC student mascot, works hard preparing in advance for his theatrics performed on game day.

Each game, Paul Holshouser, John Colpitts and Andrew Head transform into the school mascot, taking turns in Rameses' suit.

Tonight, Holshouser and Colpitts rummage through a Chapel Hill trash bin for props to use in Saturday's game.

Holshouser explains that they usually go to Wal-Mart to buy cheap props but thought the store wouldn't carry what they were looking for tonight.

"Since ECU is a pirate we're thinking about making him walk the plank," says Holshouser, the senior mascot member. "So we're looking for a board."

Saturday

7 a.m.

N4 Parking Lot

Thirteen students rush out of their residence halls into the rainy, windy darkness to remove their cars from the N4 Lot, located behind Cobb and Connor residence halls.

The University Department of Public Safety has placed red flags and parking lot reservation signs to forearm drivers so they can avoid having their cars towed.

In less than 15 minutes, DPS will issue tickets, and 13 cars will be towed to the back lot of the UNC General Administration building because they are illegally parked.

12:36 p.m.

Tar Heel Town

As a helium tank puffs out bright balloons, lines start to form at the barbecue tent. Jackie Wilson's 1960s hit "Higher and Higher" echoes from the Oldies 100.7 tent as a mom dances with her toddler.

Blake Smith says he enjoys eating at Tar Heel Town before games. "This is one of my favorite parts of pregameing – it's really good barbecue."

Polk Place looks like a Student Stores fashion show, with throngs of fans sporting UNC T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, jerseys, tattoos and ponchos.

12:21 p.m.

Concessions

Craig Marks is already cooking his chili. As the faculty adviser for the UNC Skydiving Club, Marks helps run the food stand that the club works to raise money. He runs a "benevolent dictatorship," allowing club members to watch some of the game amid their selling.

He knows concessions add to the spirit of the game. "Can you imagine 15,000 students showing up here with little brown bag lunches?" he asks. "It just wouldn't be the same."

12:32 p.m.

Top of the Hill

As game time approaches, Top of the Hill Restaurant on Franklin Street is bustling with the movement of pregame excitement.

The bar is decorated with Carolina blue and white balloons and packed with both UNC and ECU fans.

Sophomore Tricia Wessels, a hostess at Top of the Hill, says business has picked up since the previous week's victory.

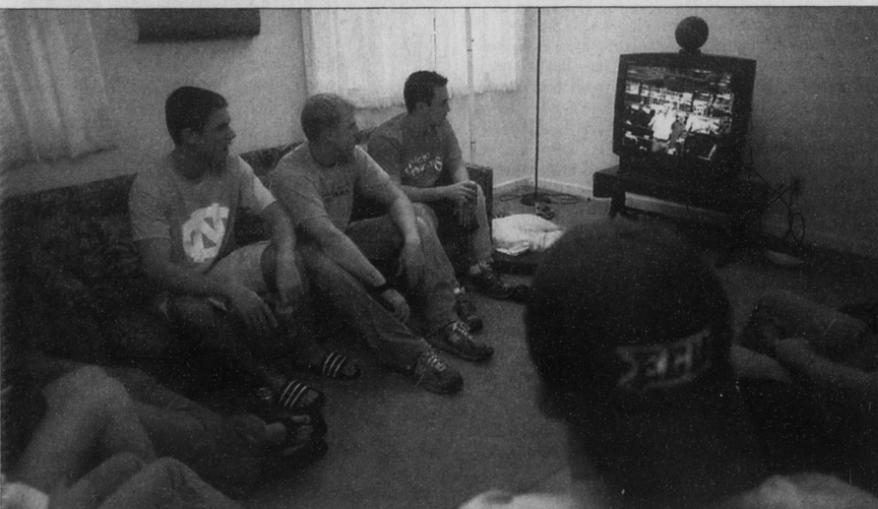
"Tonight, the bar is going to be crazy," she says.

"Football days are usually crazy, but I think FSU just triggered this huge attendance."

As for the customers, fans clad in both Carolina blue and East Carolina gold and purple share in anticipation and excitement of the game.

Charles Smith, an avid ECU fan who was with two UNC fans, drove an hour and a half from Wilson to view the rivalry.

As for the UNC fans he was with, he says, "They are close



DTH/CHRISTINE NGUYEN



DTH/LAURA BERNARD