

# Sophomores celebrate their 5th birthdays

BY ABBEY CALDWELL  
STAFF WRITER

Today is a big day for sophomore Afshin Humayun.

It's his fifth birthday. Born Feb. 29, 1988, Humayun is one of the rare few born on the leap year day.

Because of celestial movements, people born on that day only have true birthdays every four years.

"Kids used to try to make fun of me and say that I should be sad that I don't have a birthday," Humayun said.

To make him feel better, Humayun said, his family had ways of making his birthday special when he was growing up.

"When I turned 8, instead of having eight candles on the cake, they had two," he said.

He also said his parents put two and a half candles on his birthday cake when he turned 10 years old.

Though hard numbers are hard to come by, about 187,000 people in the United States call this anomaly their birthday.

Leap years are caused by the imperfection of the Gregorian calendar used by most countries.

It takes 365.2422 days for Earth to rotate around the sun. Because the calendar year only has 365 days, every year would experience a loss of about one-fourth of a day.

An extra day is added every four years to make up for the fraction of the day lost by each rotation.

Humayun said he never feels short-changed by his irregular birthday.

"I guess you could think about it like my birthday doesn't exist, but I would like to think about it like there's actually two days to celebrate it," he said. "I can do it on Feb. 29 or March 1 or both if I wanted to."

Corey Johnson, a sophomore with a February 29 birthday, said the concept of a leap year was hard for him to understand as a child.

"I don't think I really knew what it was until I was 12," he said. "That was when I first realized that it didn't come every year for real."

He said that because he used to get jealous of other children and their regularly occurring birthdays, his family let him celebrate on Feb. 28 and March 1 until he was about 10 years old.

But now he gets to catch up on old childhood birthdays.

Johnson said he plans to go with his parents to the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh to celebrate his 20th birthday.

"It's kind of like a 5-year-old birthday party type thing," he said.

Contact the Features Editor at [features@unc.edu](mailto:features@unc.edu).

# Knights of Columbus, that hurt

"We now watch as weird Daily Tar Heel guy goes to fence."

Thus spoke David Winer, member of the UNC fencing team.

Yes, UNC has a fencing team. And yes, I, "weird Daily Tar Heel guy," went to fence.

Tuesday afternoon, I called fencing coach Ron Miller and asked if I could fence with the team.

An hour later, I waltzed into Fetzer Gym and looked around. I saw fencers lined up in pairs, going at it like starved Frenchmen fighting over the last bite of a crepe.

When they spotted me, their faces all said the same thing: "Weird Daily Tar Heel guy is toast."

It took a couple tries to simply get my jacket on correctly (with assistance, no less). Next, they pulled a glove onto my sword hand so that my opponent's blade couldn't travel up my sleeve and puncture my lung. Terrific!

Then I learned that fencing involves three weapon classes — sabers, foils and epees. Horrific!

"How much does it hurt?" I asked Winer, a freshman (and a seasoned saber-ist like myself).



SAM ROSENTHAL  
A GARDEN STATE OF MIND

"It depends who's hitting you," he said.

Who would be hitting me? Will Randolph, a senior who started fencing at age 10. Looks like former Phish frontman Trey Anastasio, but built like a Volvo — no questions about his safety. As for mine ...

"You're gonna get killed," said freshman Dylan Hubbard.

But I couldn't die honorably until I learned the basics.

"If you can't pick it up, you're not as smart as some 6-year-olds I've coached," Randolph said.

Sam Rosenthal: Are you smarter than a first-grader?

Randolph taught me in 30 minutes what usually takes a few hours a day for a few days to learn — like a fencing Maymester.

First, we covered movement: advancing, retreating, lunging

and tripping (not a usual fencing movement).

Then we touched on basic parry positions for the saber. Parrying means, basically, "Stop the pointy metal thing from hitting you."

A lesson in attacking followed, and Randolph let me hit him repeatedly — while questioning the masculinity of my blows.

Ultimately, the lesson on attacking proved pointless, as did the one on parrying. But the lesson on butt-whipping left an impression. Actually, many impressions.

See, after my brief tutorial, Randolph suggested that we fence each other, like Muhammad Ali challenging Steve Urkel in boxing.

I handed my recorder to Winer and Hubbard (wanting to document my final minutes on Earth).

Will Randolph ... Weird Daily Tar Heel guy ... En garde!

I lunged; he dodged. He lunged; I cringed. I struck; he parried. He struck; I cried. And the peanut gallery loved every minute of it.

"He's scared to hit Will, and I'm pretty sure he's afraid of getting hit," Winer said.

You got that right. "Someone in this normal pos-

tion wouldn't be fencing right away," Winer said. "The average person can't just go in and fence."

This average person tried to "just go in and fence." This average person looked, as Hubbard put it, "like a stupid fish."

Winer added, "A fish out of water — aka you don't belong here."

However, for a single, glimmering moment, I belonged. Somehow, on one pass, my saber touched Randolph before his contacted me. Score one for the Samster!

That was it. Final score: 20-1. "But you had that one beautiful touch," Randolph consoled me.

Removing my mask and jacket felt like exiting a sauna. I collapsed onto a chair and asked Miller if he watched our bout. "I did a little bit. You were moving pretty well," the coach said. "It's hard to grasp the concepts of the sport in a few minutes. ... (Fencing) is chess at the speed of boxing. I saw he was nice — he didn't hurt you."

No offense, Coach, but my arms and back want a rebuttal.

Or, as we fencers say, a repose.

Contact Sam Rosenthal at [samrose@email.unc.edu](mailto:samrose@email.unc.edu).

# Lawson's status questionable for BC

## Deon Thompson also may not play

BY GREGG FOUND  
SENIOR WRITER

Ty Lawson could return to the court for the first time in seven games Saturday — it'll just happen about 700 miles away.

Lawson practiced lightly Wednesday and Thursday and could be a go for minimal minutes in Chestnut Hill, Mass., against Boston College.

"Ty yesterday in practice went up and down the court in three-on-zero and five-on-zero situations," coach Roy Williams said in his news conference Thursday. "Nothing where there was a defense. He did

some shooting, and that was it."

Williams said he would try to give Lawson some practice time today in more game-like situations.

"If that goes well, we'll perhaps try to play him for a few minutes against Boston College," Williams said.

"But that decision will not be made until Saturday morning."

If he can't play, the Tar Heels will still be lead by the same steady hand in senior Quentin Thomas.

UNC is 5-1 in the ACC with Lawson available and has been 6-1 in the conference since his injury.

"The kids take ownership when I say, 'We're not going to have Ty, so you've got to play better,'" Williams said.

While some players might be

tempted to make up for Lawson's absence by hoisting more shots, it's the all-around effort Williams has been pleased with.

"Guys have been willing to try to do more — and do more within the framework of what we want."

The Tar Heels might need more of that come Saturday. Deon Thompson could miss the Boston College game if his knee and back injuries continue to bother him.

"If he is not considerably better today and tomorrow than he was yesterday, I might just hold him out completely," Williams said Thursday.

Even Thomas can't escape the eyes of the trainers.

"Quentin Thomas, on the injury report it said, 'watch closely,'" Williams joked. "That's what the crap I do every day out there, is watch everybody closely. So I don't know what that means, but we've got to 'watch him closely.'"

Williams has maintained all along that the UNC can't drastical-



Sophomore guard Ty Lawson could log some minutes against Boston College.

ly change its style of play because of an injury or two.

But the Lawson absence has given them time to get a lot of work done when they're forced to slow down.

"What we've tried to do is do a better job within our half-court offense," he said. "We have not one day failed to work on a half-court offense."

Practice has changed a little bit, too. Some of the injured players who can't run sprints ride exercise bikes for conditioning.

"Yesterday we didn't have enough bicycles," Williams said. "It felt like a M.A.S.H. unit out there."

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