

This summer's 'East Carolina' decision: case is closed now

Bill Cobey: Carolina could fill its schedule with in-state foes

By GENE UPCHURCH
Sports Editor

Some people called it the "ECU decision." Whatever the name, the decision this summer by the UNC athletic department to discontinue scheduling non-Atlantic Coast Conference football opponents from North Carolina was unpopular among many

Action

people and received much criticism from area press and particularly from fans and supporters of East Carolina University.

Bill Cobey, UNC's athletic director, said the decision was made to free Carolina from any obligation it might have to play in-state schools in football. Some people felt that if Carolina played one school regularly, like ECU, it should play other in-state schools as well.

"We would prefer to limit the number of in-state schools we play," Cobey said. "During future years, we could fill our entire schedule with schools from within North Carolina."

Cobey said the decision was made so the University could reserve the privilege of reconsidering the school's schedule and policies as we go along.

Carolina's schedule already has been completed partially for 1981 to 1988 and Cobey said the decision will allow teams within the state to plan their schedules better.

"We shouldn't lead other teams on or give them false expectations," he said.

Cobey said much of the criticism the university had received for the decision to limit games against in-state schools was unjustified. He said that the decision was not directed at ECU alone because ECU has a powerful enough team to have the potential to defeat Carolina.

"If we were so afraid of ECU, why did we schedule them in the first place?" Cobey said. ECU defeated Carolina 38-17 in 1975 but Carolina won 12-10 last year.

"ECU thinks of themselves as a football power, just because they have had some successes," Cobey said.

The games against East Carolina have been popular, but not as popular as everyone thinks, Cobey added. Last year, for example, the game against ECU was sold out but Cobey said that game was band day, cheerleader day and scout day "and we filled the stands with them." Only 4,800 tickets were sold by East Carolina for the game, he said.

"ECU thinks they are prominent, and because of this prominence, they think we should play them," Cobey said. "I see no reason to play them just because of their successes."

Because a football schedule sometimes is made as much as 15 years in advance, it is difficult for athletic officials to predict exactly what kind of opponent they will face when it's time for the game.

"We didn't know that Pitt would be national champions when we scheduled them," Cobey said. Carolina will play the Panthers next year. "When we made the schedule, we didn't know we'd be playing Kentucky in the Peach Bowl. It's hard to predict where the various teams will be."

He said that teams such as ECU could have several years of success, and then their



UNC AD Bill Cobey

programs could drop off after schedules already had been made.

"Each school should have the right to play who they want to," Cobey said. "The overwhelming majority of people interested in athletics would prefer an intersectional schedule."

Cobey added that a policy limiting the number of in-state schools Carolina plays in basketball has been in effect for years.

"Most people haven't liked it, but they understood it," he said. "There's something about it when everybody is treated equally and not being discriminated against."

Dye: in-state rivalries important to state; other conference schools playing Pirates

By SKIP FOREMAN
Staff Writer

Tucked away in the corner of the campus of East Carolina University is a McDonald's restaurant. This is, however, no ordinary burger parlor. It is a shrine, or sorts. A shrine to East Carolina athletics, especially Pirate football.

In keeping with the ECU decor, the place is designed in purple and gold. Paintings of football players are in every available nook and cranny. To remind people who is responsible for all this, there is a painting of Dr. Leo Jenkins hanging in the center of the main dining area.

Conspicuously exposed in a corner is the school's ultimate monument to their athletic program. It is a painting of the north stands of Kenan Stadium. There are three seconds left on the scoreboard clock in the fourth quarter. Carolina has 17 points, the visitors have 38. Those visitors are East Carolina.

It is the moment of triumph in ECU sports. But moments like those will turn to very distant memories, unless something changes by 1981. The University of North Carolina athletic department has decided to drop its commitment with East Carolina, according to athletic director Bill Cobey, keeping ECU on the schedule would mean having to include other non-Atlantic Coast Conference in-state schools for the future.

Needless to say, there are those in Greenville who see the move as a cop-out, as some sort of a snobbish act to keep the in-state schools from attaining any measure of credibility within their football program. Among the coaches most offended and perplexed is ECU Head Coach Pat Dye.

Dye was imported from the land of football, Alabama. East Carolina brought him in for the purpose of upgrading even further a football program which was growing in leaps and bounds within the Southern Conference. Dye's first move was to get rid of the team's I-formation and switch to the wishbone.

ECU football became even more fast-paced and more exciting. More plans were made. It's football stadium would be expanded to 35,000 to accommodate the crowds that would come in to see the South Carolinas, the N.C. States, and even maybe, the Carolinas. This year, ECU goes independent.

But, alas, their dream for the moment has been turned to wishing. An administrative needle has been punched into their athletic balloon. Dye does not understand.

"The chemistry doesn't add up. There's nobody in North Carolina who will be able to challenge UNC as an academic institution or athletic institution," Dye said. "Nobody's threatening that."

"I think playing with Duke is very important. I hope we take 15,000. We have to take a lot of people." Dye thinks that the crowd will be beneficial for both schools. Duke could use a big crowd, and the Pirates could use the experience. However, his major concern, aside from the upcoming season, is rescheduling Carolina.

"The year before (1975), they played bad and we played good. We didn't beat a very good football team. They were on a low note.

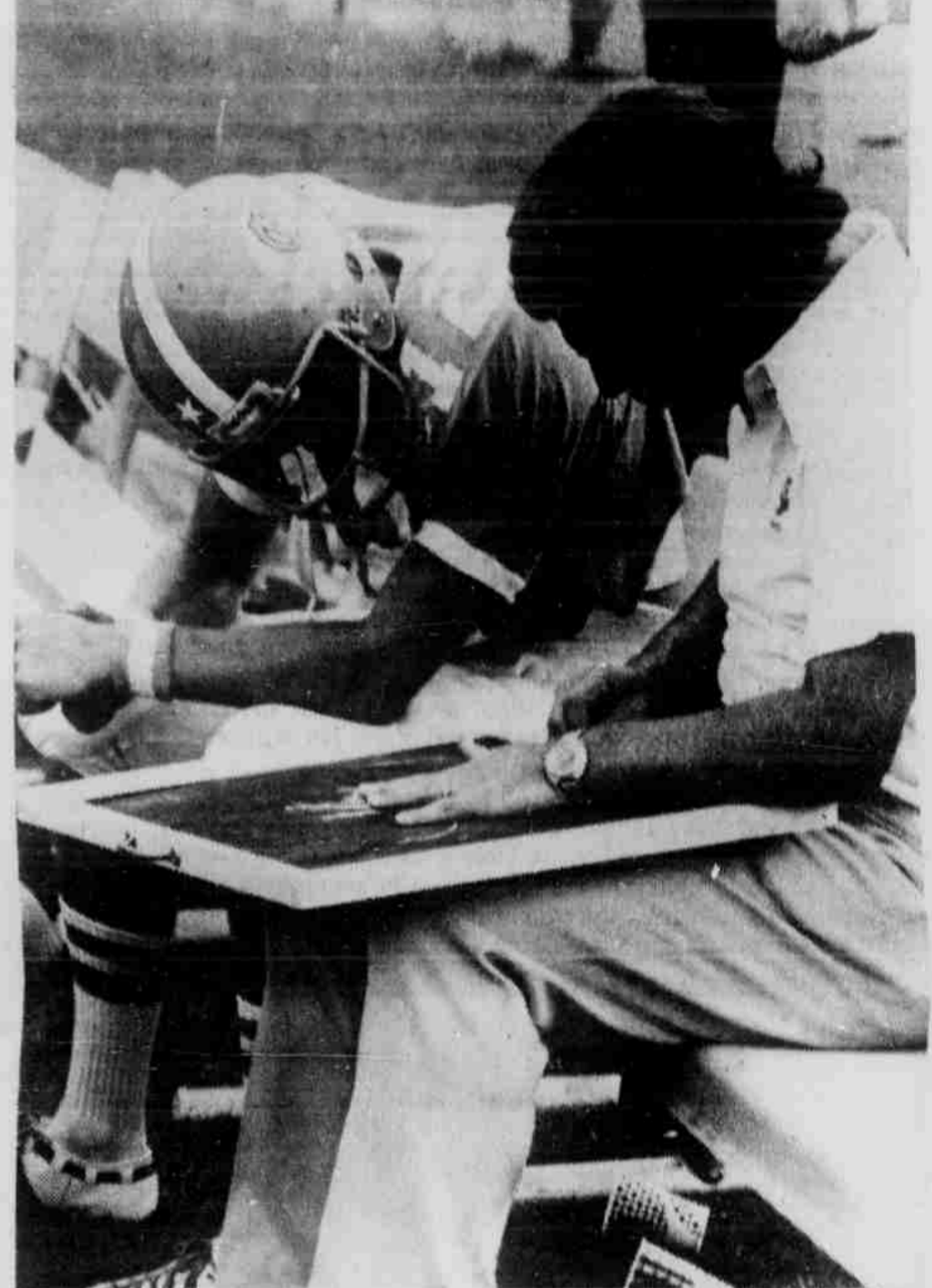
Meanwhile, the jury is still out on whether ECU will ever see Chapel Hill after 1981. Pat Dye would like nothing better than to bring his of skinny-legged boys up from the coastal plain and give the Piedmont city slickers a good football game. He sees the effect of the rivalry as far-reaching.

"I just hope the thing is resolved. I think it's important to the state of North Carolina."

Reaction

"If you're good enough, you're going to team up with anyone anytime," Dye said. "We can compete with State, Duke, and UNC."

Meanwhile, ECU went ahead and sought a game with Duke, something that for a time appeared doubtful. After negotiations, and Duke's realization that they could get no one else for the date, the contract was signed in May for the Sept. 10 game. Dye said that he even tried to arrange a game with Maryland, but is not disappointed with playing the Blue Devils.



Staff photo by Bruce Clarke

Quarterback Matt Kupec discusses game strategy with offensive coordinator Jim Donnan during a game against N.C. State last year in Kenan Stadium.

Being courteous, Cobey says

Smith refused interview for UCLA

By GENE UPCHURCH
Sports Editor

A chill went up the spine of nearly every North Carolina basketball supporter this summer when word got out that UNC coach Dean Smith had been approached by UCLA to be the basketball coach there.

UCLA was in the market for a new coach when Gene Bartow quit after two years of intense criticism from southern California press and UCLA fans for not making the team the perennial national champions they were under John Wooden.

In the course of his search, UCLA Athletic Director J. D. Morgan called Smith and asked him to consider the UCLA post.

"Morgan called (me) and asked permission to talk to Smith about the possibility of an interview for that job," UNC Athletic Director Bill Cobey said last week.

"They talked by phone a couple of times and explored the possibility of an interview," Cobey said. "But, Smith never went for an interview. He just decided not to interview."

Cobey said that Smith was being "courteous" by telling Morgan he would consider being interviewed for the job.

"If he hadn't told UCLA he'd think about it, he wouldn't be courteous," he said.

Cobey added that when many coaching jobs in professional and college basketball become available, Smith often is called for recommendations and other thoughts he might have on the job. And, he inevitably is asked what it would take him to consider taking the job.

"But, he has not interviewed for a job, to my knowledge," Cobey said.

Cobey added that during the time Smith was considering being interviewed for the UCLA position, there were no contract renegotiations between him and Carolina.

"He's been happy and has no intention of leaving," Cobey said. "I can understand the anxiety that fans had when they learned he could leave. I had some anxiety myself. It's a compliment to UCLA for him to be considered because it means they have a program that is as attractive as the one here and it's a compliment to our program. But it's a compliment to Coach Smith more than anything."

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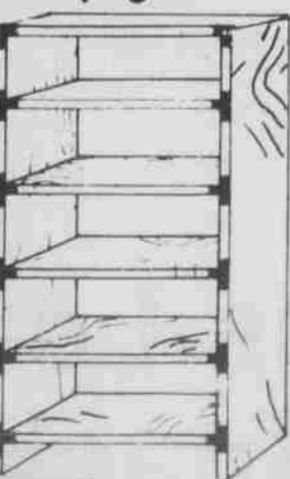
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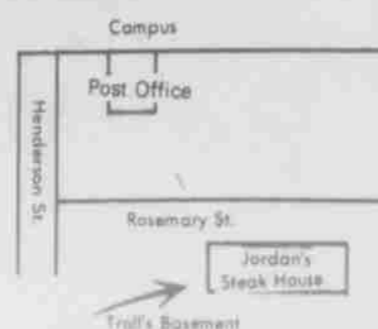
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