

many ACC tournaments as a player

Of course, there's a minor problem here. Did we want to risk getting to Washington and being left without tickets to the rest of the tournament? We deliberated the points for and against it.

For: 1) There are 4,000 more seats in Capitol Centre than in Greensboro Coliseum; 2) unlike Greensboro, there is alternative entertainment in Washington for the losing team's fans.

Against: 1) Fans would be more spread out at motels, making it hard to go from one to the other in search of tickets; 2) having traveled so far, the fans (except Maryland's) would not want to leave; 3) we would be in strange territory.

But classes were winding down, the weather was beautiful and we had no plans for break. Thursday at 5 a.m., we were off, joined by a third friend, Doug. We joined in the parade of North Carolina license-plated cars on Interstate 95 through northern Virginia.

We arrived at Capitol Centre about 11 a.m., two hours before the first game was to begin. We split up to search. After 15 minutes, Doug found me. He had bought two full ticket books for \$50 each (face value was \$30). This put him into the selling end of the scalping business.

It seemed first-round tickets were all over the place, since ACC fever did not have such a hold in that area. Doug was lucky to get \$15 each (face value) for the tickets.

An acquaintance was standing outside, and he said he could get me a ticket to the semifinals and final for \$30. I said great, and he said he would call me that night.

We went inside, and after another 15 minutes, Doug stumbled upon an unexpected bonus — a semifinals and final ticket book lying on the walkway. Okay, we were set. But things do not always happen that easily.

That night, my acquaintance called.

"I've got your ticket," he said.

"I don't need it now."

"But I've already paid for it. You said you wanted it."

I had no choice. I bought it.

For the semifinals Friday, we arrived a few minutes early so I could sell the extra ticket.

But before I could, Doug had made another purchase — two semifinals tickets at the face value of \$10 each. We were in business.

The buying and selling continued Friday and Saturday, almost our own stock market. Prices were relatively high for the semifinals, about \$15 a ticket. But a problem developed: Maryland, the semi-host school, lost in the semifinals. The effect was felt Saturday.

Game time was 8 p.m. We started trying to sell about 6:30 p.m., asking \$35.

"It's the going price," I said several times.

We were not kidding anybody but ourselves.

By 7, we were asking \$20. At 7:30, we wanted to go ahead inside, so we sold them for an average of \$10 each. (One guy paid us \$20, to fool). We, of course, had saved the best tickets for ourselves — just behind the Carolina student section, and just beside the Virginia students.

Oh well, even though the Tar Heels lost, we had something to talk about. When all the ticket money had changed hands, we had each paid \$25 for \$30 worth of tickets.

As the time neared for the 1977 tournament, I really did not get that excited about trying to go. The desire had been partially satisfied by the past two trips, and I did not relish going through the ticket-scalping process again. The times before, most all the people I was begging for tickets were strangers — people I would never have to deal with again, I thought. What they thought of me did not matter — anything to get into the ACC tournament.

But since the 1976 event, I had come to know many of the people who would pass by me. To go out and beg for tickets in front of them would be an ego-deflating experience.

Besides, all the games were going to be on television for the first time, anyway.

Of course, I went ahead and signed up for the student ticket lottery. One hundred tickets have been allotted for each of the past three tournaments for UNC students. I have not mentioned that earlier because, even though I had signed up in both years, I

had never won anything in my life, especially anything with only a one-in-20 chance of winning.

The only way I was going to go to the tournament this year was to have a ticket ahead of time — no on-the-spot dealing. That meant I was going to have to win the opportunity to buy a student ticket, or have a friend who would give me a regular ticket. I did not count on either very highly.

The time for the drawing came — halftime of the Maryland game in Carmichael Auditorium, in mid-February. Enthusiasm for the team was on the downswing, since the Tar Heels had lost three of their past four conference games and had fallen out of first place. At halftime, many students did not bother to listen to the announcement of which four page numbers representing sheets of 25 names each were drawn. I did, not expecting too much.

And I did not get too much. Four numbers were drawn, and page 18 (mine) was not one.

"Oh well," I said to my companion. "Can I come over and watch it on television with you?"

We were moving along with our conversation when I thought I heard "sheet number 18" announced.

"What did he say?" I asked her.

"I think it was 18, but what does it mean?" she asked.

It was the first alternate page. I had a slim chance.

During the next week, I was out of town for all but two days, and I did not know what process to go through, as an alternate.

A week after the drawing, I was in the *Daily Tar Heel* office about 7:30 p.m., finishing up some work I had neglected during my travels the previous week. I had probably been there at that time only once or twice since school had begun the previous fall.

But I was there when the student-ticket director, Mike Dixon, came in. Every spare moment I had had since the drawing, I had been looking for him, to no avail.

"I've got a notice that needs to go in for tomorrow," he said. "Can you take it?"

Boy, did I. Thirteen of the 100 winners had not bought tickets, so the 25 students on page 18 were eligible, on a first-come, first-served basis, to pick up tickets the next morning at the ticket office.

By the time the other 24 students read the *Daily Tar Heel* the next morning, I was at the ticket office with the four friends with whom I had signed up. The office opened at 8:30, and 15 minutes later, we had made our purchases. As we walked away, a couple of other groups came in, and a few moments later, all the tickets were gone.

By the luck of circumstances and the draw, I had a ticket. What a difference it made when tourney time arrived two weeks later.

There were no worries about arriving early to get a good deal. When I did arrive, I just strolled past those poor souls who lined the walk through the parking lot, the same one in which that fateful purchase had been made two years earlier.

"Ticket, ticket. Sir, do you have an extra ticket?" they asked.

"No, I sure don't," I said.

Among those walking past them were Terry Sanford, Jim Hunt, Skipper Bowles and Jim Holshouser (15 seconds apart) and Ferebee Taylor, along with Will Wilson.

What a feeling it gives you. A great illusion. No, I'm not that important, I was just lucky.

While the seat inside was not on a par with the ones the other people I grouped myself with had, it was the best I had had any ACC tournament — just behind the goal, once again beside the Virginia students. Revenge was sweet.

For three years I have done it. This year, it will be harder, almost impossible, for me to go back into the scalping business. And I can not expect that kind of luck again for 20 years.

Hey, friend. Are you using your 1978 ticket?

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