

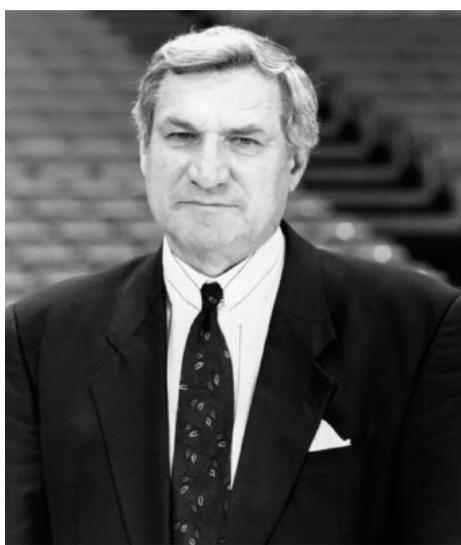
**FREE****ORANGE****SERVING THE TRIANGLE****COMMUNITY  
SPORTS NEWS****December 2025  
Volume 42  
#683****BASKETBALL ★ CYCLING ★ RUNNING ★ OUTDOORS****America Celebrates 250 Years:  
Orange County Looks  
Back at Dean Smith**

UNC Athletics stands as one of the most respected programs in the nation, and no figure embodies its values more deeply than Dean Smith. As America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, Carolina's athletic journey since the 1976 Bicentennial offers a revealing lens into the evolution of college sports—an evolution shaped, in many ways, by Smith's influence on what leadership, integrity, and teamwork should look like.

Smith, the legendary UNC basketball coach who passed away in 2015 at age 83, always seemed like the exception in a field known for ego and excess. Raised in Emporia, Kansas, by Baptist schoolteachers, he betrayed no slickness or swagger. "We'd all joke around and say, 'If I had the kind of juice Coach Smith did, I'd use it a lot differently,'" recalled former point guard King Rice. "I wouldn't be that humble." Yet humility was fundamental to Smith's identity. He believed character was as important as talent, and he modeled that belief every day.

Known for remembering the names of managers, support staff, and every player who wore Carolina blue—from superstars like Michael Jordan and James Worthy to walk-ons—Smith ran a program untouched by scandal. He never cheated, threw tantrums, or played to the cameras. His players graduated, and they learned life lessons that extended far beyond the court.

Critics sometimes argued that Smith's

*Dean Smith*

insistence on shared sacrifice limited individual stardom. "Only Dean Smith," the joke went, "held Michael Jordan to under 20 points per game." But Carolina always had the last word: winning. When he retired in 1997 with 879 victories, he held the record

*DEAN SMITH, Continued on page 4***Chapel Hill Drops  
Ball On Urban Archery**

There won't be any urban archery bow hunting for deer next month in Chapel Hill, Adam Smith of the Rec Dept. told CSN.

"The person assigned the task (me) did not register the Town with the NC Wildlife office on time. They will not accept late applications. My apologies for causing you difficulties and denying you the opportunity to participate in the State's program.

"Currently there are no ordinances about 'hunting' or on the Town's participation in the program. There is only a 2010 proclamation based on the Mayor's pleasure to continue or discontinue our participation.

"Again my apologies for any problems I have caused you."

This came after last year's program took 15 deer off the streets (13 females), the highest number in years. Previous year harvest was only one.

The Chapel Hill program for deer management on private land allows licensed hunters to take deer via bow and arrow during the urban archery season (normally mid Jan. through mid Feb.) and follows state wildlife rules. Hunting on public land is prohibited. Chapel Hill is one of a few Triangle communities that participate in the program. Wake Forest (13 taken last year) is another.

Add this to the list of screwups by the rec department like no adult basketball leagues in many, many years. *J.B.*

**NC Ski Resorts****Wintry Blasts Tease  
Tar Heel Skiers***Related Story Page 7*

Skiers in North Carolina got a brief early start to the new season in mid November when winter temps blasted through the region bringing fresh snow and the Sugar Mountain and Cataloochee resorts made snow and opened for several days of skiing on limited trails in good conditions. It was a brief reminder that cold temps are a wonderful asset and really can enhance snow making in the Southeast.

The region had 4.422M ski/snowboard visits last year, the most since 5.2M in 20-21

season. Resorts here had 93 operating days for the winter season, the most since 105 in 2018. The previous year had 84, according to the Kottke End of Season and Guest Experience Report for 24-25. There was snowfall too—49 inches, the most since 45.2 in the 20-21 season. Previous years were 37 and 25.

Nationally, ski resorts averaged 150 inches of snowfall, down 7 percent from 23-24, and below the ten-year average of 175. Visitation clearly was aided by continued growth and

*SKIERS, Continued on page 4***Spend New Year's  
Day Outdoors**

Three First Day hikes and a Cary bike ride are on tap for Jan. 1, 2026, in the Triangle.

Plans for the annual Greensboro Velo Club Polar Bear bike ride in Greensboro (25-62m) and a Carolina Godiva 8K trail run in Hillsborough are still in the works. Check the Cycles de Oro website for updates on the bike ride and carolinagodiva.org for race info. They are awaiting course approval.

Jordan Lake's First Day hike is a scavenger hike at Ebenezer Church Rec Area, Apex, 9 a.m. Join a park ranger on a scavenger hunt involving local animal silhouettes along the trail. Learn about the animals at Jordan and their special adaptations.

The annual Eno River Association New Year's Day hikes at 2 p.m. are 1 and 3.6 miles along Cox Mountain Trail from the end of Cole Mill Road, Durham, at Few's Ford Access. Arrive 20-30 minutes early as hikes draw large crowds. The one miler is family friendly and the longer hike follows Buck Quarter Creek, Ridge and Fieldstone trails. Refreshments follow. Volunteers are needed to help

with parking.

Friends of Lower Haw SP will lead a one-hour hike at 10 a.m. starting at the Haw River access parking lot at the bridge on 15-501S, Pittsboro.

The 25/40/62m bike rides touch several counties and start from McGregor Draft House, McGregor Village, Cary at 10 a.m. No registration needed. Refreshments follow.

**Winter Sports  
Coming Jan. 14**

The next issue of CSN (Jan. 14) will highlight Winter Sports, with SE downhill and XC skiing, plus a wrap of N.C. Senior Games state finals where Orange athletes earned a ton of medals, plus a look ahead at spring sports leagues.

Midterm ACC Hoops grades and Spring Running follow in February.

Be sure to sign up on the CSN website for monthly news alerts.

**Inside:  
Fall Champs  
ACC Surprises  
World Cup Lineup**

**Duke-UNC Tie  
In Fall Sports**

UNC beat Duke twice in volleyball, once in field hockey and split swimming and fencing for a 5-5 draw with Duke in fall sports. Duke scored football and two soccer wins and split swimming and fencing.

Duke football won 32-25 in Chapel Hill, men's soccer 3-1 in Chapel Hill and women's soccer 3-2 in Durham.

Duke men swimming lost 205-95 and women swimming won 158-142 in Durham. In fencing, Duke men won 14-13 and women lost 16-11 in Chapel Hill.

UNC field hockey won 2-1 in OT in Chapel Hill and volleyball 3-0 in Chapel Hill and two nights later 3-0 in Durham. Only regular season matches were counted.

UNC won 4-3 last fall.

# N.C. High School Fall Championships

## Soccer

- 7A:** #1 Marvin Ridge of Waxhaw topped #4 Chapel Hill 2-1 in 2OT to win the state boys championship in Greensboro. Gilbert Schmidler scored for CHHS. Halftime was 1-1. Chapel Hill finished 18-5. MR was runnerup last year. Earlier, Chapel Hill beat #20 Cleveland 4-1, #5 South Durham 2-0, #8 Clayton 5-3, #3 New Hanover 3-1 in the regionals.
- 6A:** #3 East Chapel Hill fell to #1 Middle Creek 2-0 in regionals after beating #14 Brunswick 2-0, #6 Harnett Central 2-1, #2 Jacksonville 3-2.
- 5A:** #12 Seaforth beat #21 Southern Guilford 3-1, lost to #5 Orange 4-1. #18 Cedar Ridge lost to #15 Southern Wayne 3-1. #5 Orange beat #12 Seaforth 4-1, lost to #4 Montgomery 5-1.
- 4A:** #10 Carrboro beat #23 SW Edgecombe 9-0, #7 East Duplin 2-0, lost to #2 Clinton 1-0.
- 3A:** #8 Northwood beat #24 Louisville 3-0, lost to #1 NCSSM (Durham) 2-1.
- 1A:** #5 Woods Charter beat #12 River Mill 2-1, lost to #4 Cape Hatteras 1-0. #14 Chatham Charter beat #19 WS Prep Academy 10-2, lost to #14 Leadership Academy 4-0.

## Football

- 3A:** #18 Northwood lost to #15 Hertford Co. 26-14.
- 5A:** #24 Orange lost to #9 SE Alamance 42-0.
- 5A:** #20 Seaforth beat #13 Brunswick 29-28, lost to #4 Croatan 49-13.
- 7A:** #18 Chapel Hill High lost to #15 Marvin Ridge 52-13.

## Cross Country

- 4A:** Carrboro swept boys and girls state cross country championships. Carrboro team average times for the 5K were 17:37.87 (boys) and 20:20.30 (girls). Top ten finishers were Prersley Pyne, 10th girls, 19:53 and Benjamin Horton, 8th boys, 16:57.
- 2A:** Eno River Academy girls, led by Ali Otto, 7th, 20:00.86, were fourth (average 22:03.8).
- 3A:** Sydney Gray, Northwood girls, 20:12, fifth and Jordan Wiley, Northwood boys, sixth, 17:17.

**HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS, Continued on page 4**

## NC Road Races

### December 11

Festivus Fun Run, Bull City Running, South Durham, 5:30 p.m. Register at [bullcityrunning.com/events/festivus](http://bullcityrunning.com/events/festivus).

### December 12

Huntersville Holiday 5K, 7 p.m., [raceroster.com](http://raceroster.com).

### December 13

Reindeer Run 5K, Central Carolina Community College, Pittsboro, 8am, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com). *Live & Virtual.*

Jingle Bell LEAP 5K, Miracle League Field, downtown Durham, 9am, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com). *Live & Virtual.*

Winter Runderland 5K, Aberdeen, 8:30 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Craven SmartStart Holiday Hustle 5K/10K, New Bern, 8:15 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Dirty Santa Trail Run 5m, Lenoir, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Frosty Run 10K/5K, Wake Forest, 8 a.m., [fsseries.com](http://fsseries.com).

Running of the Balls 5K, Greensboro, 6 p.m., [therunningoftheballs.com/#register-now](http://therunningoftheballs.com/#register-now).

Lights & Sirens Race for Hope 5K for Special Olympics, Charlotte Motor Speedway, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Sock It to Me Santa 5K,

Asheville, 9 a.m., [raceroster.com](http://raceroster.com).

SoHo-Ho and Away We Go 5K trail, Silver Coast Winery, Ocean Isle Beach, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### December 14

Lung Run 5K, The Fenton, Cary 9 a.m. to 12 noon, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Mill Chill 4m, Rocky Mount Mills, Rocky Mount, 1:30 p.m., [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com).

### December 20

Mebane MOTM Reindeer Run 5K, downtown Mebane, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

9th Suggly Sweater 5K, Sugg Farm Park, Holly Springs, 10:30 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Santa 8K, Snowman Dash, Santa Run 5K, downtown Charlotte, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com). *Live & Virtual.*

### December 27

KickStart 5K, The Fenton, Cary, 9 a.m., [fsseries.com](http://fsseries.com).

### December 28

Last Mile 6/4/2m, Lake Crabtree CP, Morrisville, 8am, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com). *Live & Virtual.*

### December 31

3rd Noon Year's Eve 5K, McAlpine Park, Charlotte,

12 noon, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Resolution Run 5K, downtown Marion, 9 p.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Running of the Lights 5K, Tanglewood Park, Clemmons, 12 midnight, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 1

Carolina Godiva New Year's Day Run 8K, River Park, Hillsborough, 1 p.m.

Charlotte New Year's 5K, 9100 Robert D. Snyder Rd., Charlotte, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

12th New Year's Resolution Run 5K/10K, Pack Sq. Park, Asheville, 10 a.m., [raceroster.com](http://raceroster.com).

### January 2

Salem Lake Frosty Fifty 5K trail run, Winston-Salem, 5:30 p.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 3

Running Outside the Lines 5K for Make-A-Wish, 7700 Perry Creek Rd., Raleigh, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 10

12th Mutts & Marshmallows 8K/5K and Doggie Dash

8K/5K, WakeMed SP, Cary, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com). *Live & Virtual.*

Freedom Starts Here 5K/10K, Pinehurst, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 24

Sanford Resolution Run 5K, Sanford, 8:30 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

10th Polar Bear Run 5K, Selma, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

8th Ainsley's Angels Frosty 5K, Wilmington, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Be Their Voice 5K, Fayetteville, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

12th Beat the Bridge 5K/10K, Jacksonville, 8:30 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 31

10th Celebration Run/Walk (Kay Yow Cancer Run) 4K untimed, WMSP, Cary, 11 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Frigid Trail Race & Polar Plunge 5K/10K trail, Charlotte Whitewater Center, 9 a.m., [whitewater.org/race-forms/frigid-trail-race-plunge](http://whitewater.org/race-forms/frigid-trail-race-plunge)

Viking Dash 5K/10K trail, Hagan Stone Park, Pleasant Garden, 10am, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

[signup.com](http://signup.com).

Tsaili Ultra 50K/8am/30K 9am/8K/9:30am, Bryson City, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Whiskey Tango Foxtrot HM /5m, Northeast Park, Gibsonville, 9:30 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 24

URTB Grind 'n Trail Run 5m/10m, Harris Lake CP, New Hill, 9 a.m., [fsseries.com](http://fsseries.com).

5th 48 Miles of Hope/48m 7am/10K/11:45/5K/11am/48m relay/7a.m., Winston-Salem, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

18th Asheville Hot Chocolate Races, HM/10K/5K, Dickson Elementary, Asheville, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 25

Occoneechee Mountain Challenge 10m trail, Historic Speedway Track, Hillsborough, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 31

Groundhog Lap Race 12H/6H/3H trail, Haw River SP, Greensboro, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

## Triangle Winter Distance Races

### February

15, Occoneechee Speedway HM Relay, Hillsborough. 28, Wake Forest Historic HM, Wake Forest.

### March

7, Umstead Trail M, Raleigh. 15, Tobacco Road M/HM, Cary. 22, Tower Climb Hill 10 Miler, Pittsboro. 22, Cary Greenway HM/10K/5K, Cary.

## NC Multisport

### January 11

Cape Fear Indoor Triathlon, Coastal Fitness Center, Hampstead, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 31

Frigid Trail Race 5K/10K trail & Polar Plunge, Charlotte Whitewater Center, [whitewater.org/race/](http://whitewater.org/race/)

## NC Bike Rides

### December 17

Wednesday Night Ride, Town Commons, Carrboro, 7-8:30 p.m., organized by SHIFT.



### Upcoming CSN Issues:

#### Digital Only

Jan. 14—Winter Sports  
Feb. 18—Spring Running, ACC Hoops  
Midterm Grades

For ads, email [joelcsn1@gmail.com](mailto:joelcsn1@gmail.com)

Deadline 7 days in advance

## NC Distance Races

### December 13

21st Run at the Rock HM/10K/5K, Cedarrock Park, Burlington, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Huntersville HM/10, Huntersville, 8 a.m., [raceroster.com](http://raceroster.com). *Live & Virtual.*

Beast of the East 100/100m/100K/50K/M/HM trail, 8 a.m., Kings Mountain, [ultrasignup.com](http://ultrasignup.com).

### December 20

Lake Norman Elf Classic HM/5K, Mooresville, 7:45 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Pilot Mountain Goat 7m/3m trail, Pinnacle, 10 a.m., [ultrasignup.com](http://ultrasignup.com) by 12/7. *Live & Virtual.*

### January 3

Frosty Fifty Trail Races 12.5K/25K/50K/50K Relay, Salem Lake Marina, Winston-Salem, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Carolina Beach SP HM/5K trail, American Legion Post #129, Carolina Beach 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 4

Raven Rock SP HM/5K Trail Run (& 5m Hike), 25K/5m, Lillington, 10 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com) by 1/1.

### January 10

21st Little River Trail Run 10m/7K, Little River Regional Park, Rougemont, 9 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

6th Mangum M/HM Ellerbe, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

Rocky Road HM/10K/5K, Charlotte Whitewater Center, 8 a.m., [whitewater.org/events-races/race-series](http://whitewater.org/events-races/race-series).

### January 16

Southern Tour Ultra trail, 50m/50K/50m relay, 10 a.m., Wilmington, [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

### January 17

Charlotte Running Co Trail Race, 13m/9m/4m, Anne Springs Greenway, Lake Haigler, 8:30 a.m., [raceroster.com](http://raceroster.com).

Mount Afton Challenge 2H run, Concord, 8 a.m., [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).

## December Standings

### Final Fall Season

#### Ocasl@Tasl

**Coed 11**—LFGFC 8-1-1 25, Unicorn FC 8-0-2 24, The Diamond Dogs 3-1-6 10, Hot Pants FC 3-0-7 9, Athletic Tri 2-0-8 6.

**Over 30**—Mountain Goat FC 8-1-1 25, TugBoat Depot 8-1-1 25, Durham FC 6-1-3 19, The Federal 5-1-4 16, Still LImpin 3-1-6 10, FC Alboz 1-1-8 4, Matienzo FC 1-0-9 3.

**Over 40**—Beercelona 9-1-0 28, Stroke City 8-0-2 24, Federal 4.0 7-1-2 22, Boca Seniors 5-0-5 15, Oldcastle United 4-1-5 13, Boot Room FC 4-0-6 12, WD 40 1-0-9 3, Wrexhamstring 9-1-9 1.

**Rec 1, Kaminsky**—Woodcroft SC 4-0-0 12, Quality Assurance 1-0-3 3, Pickup FC 1-0-3 3.

**Rec 2, Studdard**—Head Game Strong 4-0-0 12, College United FC 2-0-2 6, Chapel Hill FC 0-0-4 0.

**Rec 3, O'Hara**—AR United 92 4-1-1 13, Baby Ballers 3-2-1 11, Hilary Chi 3-1-2 10, Sporting Rose 3-0-2 9, Noir FC 2-1-1 7, The Goal Rushers 1-0-5 3, Black Sabbath 0-0-1 1.

#### Orange Co. Sportsplex Men's Basketball

Triad Elite 6-0, Bull City Bullies 4-2, Buckets 3-3, Diamond Gym 3-3, Burlington Snipers 2-4, BC Ballers 0-6.

## COMMUNITY SPORTS NEWS

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## Team White Out Wins Fall Ultimate

Team White Out went 10-1 in fall Carrboro co-rec ultimate league and earned the top seed. They beat second seed Kelly 15-11 in tournament finals after edging Power Pink 11-10 in the semis.

Team rep Stephen Poulos reviewed the season, "It was a really fun season for our team as we went by the name White Out with our team having white jerseys. Our slogan was 'it's OK to make mistakes' insinuating that we would get the disc back playing hard defense, kind of like using white out to correct our mistakes.

"Our two female matching players, Jessica Beasley and Frannie Goodrich were instrumental in us winning the league this year playing almost every point of every game showcasing their skills and experience on the field. Our team wasn't the youngest out there on the field as we were able to utilize our experience and skill to navigate through some windy conditions in semis and finals. Everyone seemed to have a great time all season and it was really exciting to see one of our teammates, Gary Baum catch the winning score in finals."

## DOM Wins Tiebreaker For Fall Dart Title

Regular season winner Darty Old Men (DOM) won the tiebreaker and took the fall Triangle Dart League championship over second seed That's Bull. DOM led 3-1 after singles, 4-4 after cricket singles, TB led 8-6 after cricket doubles and it was 10-10 after 501.

Some highlights from Matt Heimbach: Stuart Baxter from That's Bull simply could not miss in cricket; DOM had to win the last 501 game to get to the tiebreaker and Hunter Eubanks hit the clutch double to send it to the tiebreaker; Michael Lovelace hit a 180 in the tiebreaker for the early lead; after That's Bull caught up Jon Swanson hit a 127 to regain the lead; Tom Redick hit the match dart double for the championship.

## Winter State Games To Add Flag Football

BodyArmor State Winter State Games will add adult flag football Feb. 21 for 2026. Details TBA.

Other sports and dates: figure skating, March 20-22, esports, Feb. 21-22, ice hockey (youth and adult), March 13-15; pickleball, March 12-15, at Pin Point downtown Raleigh.

## Chapel Hill Wins State Ultimate Title

Top-seeded Chapel Hill edged second-seeded Carrboro 10-9 for the USA Ultimate boys high school state championship in Raleigh (9 teams).

Chapel Hill beat East Chapel Hill 14-6 and Carrboro beat Jordan 12-8 in the semis. Jordan beat East 11-6 for third place. Scorers were N/A.

## U.S. Soccer

Jan. 24—USWNT v. Paraguay, Carson City, CA, 5:30 p.m., TNT, Univision.

## 2025 FIFA Rankings

### Men

1. Spain, 2. Argentina, 3. France, 4. England, 5. Brazil, 6. Portugal, 7. Netherlands, 8. Belgium, 9. Germany, 10. Croatia.

### Women

1. Spain, 2. USA, 3. Sweden, 4. England, 5. Germany, 6. France, 7. Brazil, 8. Japan, 9. Canada, 10. Korea DPR.

## Pickleball Results

Division winners at the rescheduled BC Games for JDRE, Chapel Hill (149 players):

MDoubles 3.0-3.25: Derek Nielsen/Rafael Rivera.

MDoubles Int-Adv 60-69: Jim Arleth / Lee DeHart.

MDoubles Int-Adv 70+: Dean Williams / Tom Olson.

MDoubles: Jim Arleth/Ray Gilliam, James Young / Ryan Neil Vega.

WDoubles 3.0-3.25: Sandy Ross / Stacy Hahn.

WDoubles 3.5-3.75: Andrea Galiniski / Dione Stuart.

WDoubles Int-Adv 60-69: Rosemary Anderson / Lenore Rittenhouse.

MixDoubles 3.5-4.25: Maria McMullin / Abet Mocabangon.

MixDoubles Int-Adv 60-69: Wanda Bergan / Thomas Basile.

MixDoubles Int-Adv 70+: Lenore Rittenhouse / George Barr.

MixDoubles 4.5-5.0: Tyler Hansbrough / Chelsea English.

### Dinking for Duchene, Durham (196 players):

MDoubles 3.0 13-39: Jonah Swartz/Harrison Ramsey.

MDoubles 3.0 40-59: Felipe Ledesma / Chris Mock.

MDoubles 3.5 13-28: Dan Alkeman / Anthony Gomes.

MDoubles 3.5 239+: David Passler / Dan Westphal.

MDoubles 4.0 18+: Josh Shephard / Michael Quillen.

WDoubles 3.0 18-59: Sandrine Tokoto / Cheryl Briley.

WDoubles 3.0 60+, Anita Barker / Vicki Rohde.

WDoubles 3.5 18+: Christine Liu / Meredith Earl.

WDoubles 4.0 18+: Amy Brewington / April Nonato.

MixDoubles 3.0 18-39: Matt Hanna / Konstantina Akritidou.

MixDoubles 3.0 40+: Elisa Prestwood / Richard Cohen.

MixDoubles 3.5 18-39: Alida Van der erns / Adam Asfari.

MixDoubles 3.5 40+: Meredith Earl / Matt Lenora.

MixDoubles 4.0 18+: Kenneth Suarez / Trevlyn Roberts.

### Early Years: Serve & Support, Chapel Hill (44 players):

MDoubles Novice/Int: Corey Rosso / Tom Sporleder.

WDoubles Novice/Int: Lexi Henny / Amanda Terzion.

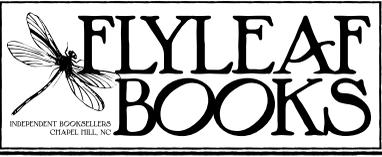
WDoubles Int & Over 50: Carol Louis / Kedlli Underwood.

MixDoubles Novice/Int: David Tuong / Jennifer Tuong.

## Community News

Holiday events at Durham Central Park downtown: Dec. 14, Durham Craft Market's Holiday Market, 10-4; Dec. 19, Durham Foodie Fare, with food trucks, music, 5:30-9:30.

Hillsborough Solstice Lantern Walk/Market, Farmers' Market Pavilion, Dec. 20, 5-8 p.m. Free but tickets (givebutter.com/c/AecERY) are needed.



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## Off The Dribble

# Biggest ACC Surprises

Chip Bremer

The 2025-26 season is still young, and the conference schedule hasn't started yet, but there were some pleasant surprises in the ACC—along with some utter disappointments. There is still plenty of time for coaches to make adjustments and for players to get into synch, but for now, these are the factors that stand out:

### Surprises

**Duke and Louisville**—Yes, everyone knew these would be the top two teams in the conference, but they may actually be better than expected. The Blue Devils passed every major non-conference test thrown at them (Kansas, Arkansas, Florida), and freshman Cameron Boozer is making a strong case for MVP.

On the other hand, the Cardinals were equally impressive, averaging over 96 points a game with at least seven players capable of putting up 20 points on any given night. Clemson also was impressive early on but given they haven't played many Q1 or Q2 opponents to this point, they had to be left out (sorry, Dan).

**Unheralded freshmen**—The ACC's superstar frosh certainly played to expectations, including Duke's Boozer, Louisville's Mikel Brown and UNC's Caleb Wilson, but how about the exceptional new guys nobody saw coming?

Newcomers like Stanford's Ebuka Okorie (21.4 ppg) and Virginia's Thijs De Ridder (18.0 ppg) led their respective teams to impressive starts. The Cavaliers also boast freshman big man Johann Grunloh, who leads the conference in blocks but received virtually no pre-season hype.

**SMU's experience**—The Mustangs boast one of the most experienced lineups in the ACC, and they are playing some of the conference's best basketball. The backcourt of Boopie Miller and Jaron Pierre are outscoring everybody, and the front line of Samet Yigitoglu and Corey Washington are putting

## ACC Hoops Starts Climbing Mountain

The ACC is slowly climbing up the mountain, winning 77 percent of non conference games through November. They went 104-31 with three teams unbeaten, five with one loss, and five others with two. The ACC won seven of 16 games in the ACC/SEC men's challenge.

The ACC had eight teams in the top 50 in NET rankings Dec. 1 and three (Duke, Louisville, UNC) in the Top 25 basketball poll. All 18 teams were .500 or better. It's encouraging, an improvement over last season when the ACC was 2-14 against the SEC and put only four in the NCAA Tournament, compared to 14 from SEC.

It's not all smiles and roses. For example, Ga. Tech was 5-3 and #195 of 365 in NET. ACC teams have suffered some "bad"—lopsided, ugly, surprising—losses along the way so far.

## 46 Former ACC Players In G League

As the season began last month, there were 46 former ACC players from 16 schools on NBA G League rosters. They included former players from UNC 5, Duke 4, Florida State 6, Louisville, Stanford, Notre Dame, Miami, Wake Forest, Clemson, N.C. State, Pitt 3 each, SMU, Virginia, 2 apiece, Georgia Tech, Syracuse, Va. Tech, 1 each and none from Boston College or California.

Former UNC players were RJ Davis, Harrison Ingram, Leaky Black, Cormac Ryan, Coby White (on rehab stint from Chicago). Ex-Duke players: Dariq Whitehead, Wendell Moore, Marques Bolden, Trevor Keels. Last year Duke and UNC had 7 players each.

up hefty numbers in terms of rebounding and blocked shots. Apparently, not every team is reliant on newcomers this year.

### Disappointments

UNC's three-point shooting—Despite the additions of Montenegrin import Luka Bogavac and freshman guard Derek Dixon, the Tar Heels still rank in the bottom third of the conference in three-point percentage at just over 31%. Bogavac in particular has struggled to find his stroke and given that so many expected him to carry the team's perimeter attack, he will need to step up in the coming months, or the team will have to rely more on Dixon (shooting threes at a 45% clip) and several role players to get by.

**NC State's defense**—Will Wade certainly delivered on bringing a more exciting product to Raleigh (currently are second in scoring behind Louisville at 93.6 ppg), but the most disappointing facet of the new program has been the lack of defense. Their lack of size in the post led to mismatches and easy points for competitors. Against Seton Hall and Texas in the Maui Invitational, they were dominated on the boards and from the three-point line, which led to a couple of losses that could've been wins had the defense showed up. Wade has time to pull this unit together, but if they don't show signs of life in the coming weeks, it could be a long season for the Wolfpack.

**ACC officiating**—It's easy to criticize the officiating when it's continually bad, but with the hopes that things would change for the better—given the introduction of the coach's challenge—it's difficult not to be disappointed in the overall product... again. It always seems that ACC officials like the sound of their whistles so much, they relish the opportunity to call the maximum number of fouls in every game, even when other conference officials seem to allow more contact and let the game flow. Oh well, there's always next year.

The ACC won six of nine games in the Challenge on day one, but only one of seven the next day. Cal and Stanford did not participate. The middle tier of ACC hoops teams continues to struggle.

But there's a long road of games to be played before the NCAA field is announced in March.

Did Kansas join the ACC? No, but they're playing lots of ACC clubs. They beat Louisville in an exhibition, lost to UNC and Duke, beat Notre Dame and Syracuse in Las Vegas and will play at NC State Dec. J.B.

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Dean Smith with basketball players Michael Jordan, Matt Doherty, and Sam Perkins, 1982

## DEAN SMITH, Continued from page 1

for the most wins in Division I men's basketball. His teams made 11 Final Four appearances and won two national championships. Jordan would later say, "Other than my parents, no one had a bigger influence on my life than Coach Smith," which is a testament to the profound respect Smith earned.

Smith's legacy continues to shape UNC Athletics across all sports—football, soccer, swimming, rowing, and especially the powerhouse non-revenue programs that define Carolina's modern identity. Field hockey, women's lacrosse, and the nationally recognized ultimate frisbee teams reflect the same discipline and pride Smith championed. These athletes compete not for television contracts but for the love of the game and the honor of representing Carolina.

Today, UNC navigates a rapidly shifting NCAA landscape marked by NIL opportunities, the transfer portal, and conference realignment. While these changes introduce complexity and new pressures, the university continues to anchor itself in the values Smith made famous.

As America marks 250 years, UNC stands as a reminder that tradition and progress can coexist—and that a program built on character can continue to thrive in even the most challenging times.

"I can't put his impact on me into words," said former player Phil Ford. "I don't know where I'd be without him in my life. He's been such an influence on me, and a friend and a brother and a father figure."

Dean Smith's success transformed UNC-Chapel Hill into a household name far beyond basketball. His teams drew national attention, increased media coverage, and contributed to Chapel Hill becoming a destination for sports fans, students, and families. The "Carolina Way"—his philosophy of humility, teamwork, and academic excellence—became

## Basketball News

Top American women's hoops players (18) will be in camp for USWNT training at Duke Dec. 12-14, led by Coach Kara Lawson. They are beginning training for the FIBA Women's World Cup in September ... UNC Basketball Museum next to the Smith Center has limited hours over the holidays. Museum is closed Dec. 24-29, open Dec. 30, closed Dec. 31-Jan. 1. Normal schedule after that. Admission is free ... Coach Roy Williams received the N.C. Award for Public Service in Asheville from NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources. He lives in Pinehurst and splits time between homes in Asheville, Charleston, Pinehurst ... Rick Fox plans to run for a legislative seat in Bahamas' House of Assembly in 2026 ... Former Durham legend Rodney Rogers passed away last month. He starred at Wake Forest and played 12 seasons in the NBA. He was 54 ...



Dean Smith, 1964

closely tied to the identity and pride of the community.

Today's college basketball landscape looks very different today, but Dean Smith's principles need not be abandoned. Those principles are to honor the team above the individual, to coach and play with integrity, to treat every person with dignity, and to remember that winning means nothing if you lose sight of the values that got you there. His legacy reminds us that character, compassion, and unselfishness will always be the true measure of the Carolina Way—and the American Way, as well.

Laurie Paolicelli. *Orange Slices*

**EDITORS' NOTE:** In celebration of America 250, the Orange County Visitors Bureau will publish *A Gathering of Voices*, available July 4, 2026. Written by Valarie Schwartz, this 48-page commemorative book highlights the people, places, and pivotal events that have shaped Orange County over the past 250 years.

This Orange Slices column was published 11/25/25.

## Community News

Join the Elf Stacular Skate Saturday, Dec. 13, 1-2:45 p.m. at Orange Co. Sportsplex, Hillsborough. Fees charged for skating and skate rental. Meet and Greet with Santa and Mrs. Claus will be held 2-4 at the Sportsplex. Free.

Nutcracker 2025 on Ice show Dec. 19 at 6 p.m., Dec. 20 at 11 a.m. Admission charged. Tickets available at the front desk.

Nightly except holidays thru Jan. 3, Durham Bulls Festibull of Lights at DBAP, 5:30 to 9 p.m. Fees charged; tickets at ticketmaster.com.

Kwanza Celebrations—Carrboro (Dec. 27) and Durham (Jan. 1). Carrboro will have food, music, poetry, dance groups 11-4 at Drakeford Library Complex. Free. African American Dance Ensemble's 40th program at Durham Army at 2 p.m. Doors open at 11. There will be performances, marketplace, art, food. Free.

## HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS, Continued from page 1

**5A:** Cedar Ridge, girls, 20:55.51 average time, were fourth, Orange, 21:18.61, fifth and Seaforth, sixth, 21:17.46. Top ten Orange boys finishers included Myles Jermyn, 15:24, second, Lucas Van Mater, 15:33, third, Grant Schmid Jr., 15:58, ninth. Team averages were Orange, second, 16:22.83 and Cedar Ridge, fifth, 16:53.

**6A,** East Chapel Hill girls (19:47.18) finished second and boys (17:19.50) fifth.

**7A,** Sadie Mersereau, 18:32, CHHS, was seventh as Chapel Hill women (19:59.09) were fifth and boys (16:54.29) seventh.

### Volleyball

**5A,** #5 Seaforth lost 3-1 to Hickory in the girls championship (24-26, 25-19, 25-21, 25-22) after beating #12 Currituck 3-0, #4 Carteret 3-0, #1 Cedar Ridge 3-1, #3 Person 3-1 in regionals. Seaforth finished 19-9 and also was runner-up last year.

#1 Cedar Ridge beat #16 S. Granville 3-0, #8 W. Alamance 3-0, lost to #5 Seaforth 3-1.

**3A,** #20 Northwood beat Martin Co. 3-0, lost to #4 Farmville Central 3-0.

**4A,** #11 Carrboro beat #22 Morehead 3-0, #6 Nash Central 3-0, lost to #3 E. Duplin 3-1.

#7 Orange beat #10 SE Alamance 3-0, #2 Southern Nash 3-1, lost to #3 Person 3-1.

**6A,** #8 East Chapel Hill beat #9 S. Lee 3-0 and lost to #1 JH Rose 3-1.

**7A,** #5 Chapel Hill beat New Bern 3-0, #4 Topsail 3-1, lost to #1 Conley 3-0.

### Tennis

Women Dual Team Tennis, **4A,** Carrboro 5, Lake Norman Charter 1, MVP Ryan Haynes (Carrboro). Local singles winners: Haynes, Morgan Stowe, Eva Noar, Bailey Birenkoff, Claire O'Brien.

**6A,** Charlotte Catholic 5, East Chapel Hill 2. Local singles winners: Nora Lucas, Isabel Lattainzer.

Tennis, Individual Players, **4A** Singles, Ryan Haynes, Carrboro, def. Morgan Stowe, Carrboro, 6-2, 6-2 for championship. Doubles, Falls/Moon (Lake Norman Charter) def. Unwin/O'Brien (Carrboro) 7-6 (7-4), 6-1 for championship. **6A,** Samantha Benton (East Chapel Hill) def. Ellie Alspaugh (S. Caldwell) 6-1, 6-0 in finals.

## Hockey Slide Continues At UNC

UNC hockey will be happy to turn the page on 2025. They've lost four of five since stuffing East Carolina 8-2 on the road and are in last place in their division of ACHA with 13 points. Division leader Kentucky has 44. UNC was 4-9-1-0-1 after the first half of the season.

In recent games, UNC lost 4-3 in OT to South Carolina in an outdoor game at Truist Field, Charlotte, and dropped another to the Gamecocks 7-4 the next day at Irmo, SC. The Heels lost 3-2 at home to George Mason (goals by Owen Kinney, Patrick O'Shaughnessy).

NC State outshot UNC 41 to 27 and blanked the Heels 7-0 in the Governor's Cup at Lenovo Center, Raleigh. Gov. Josh Stein dropped the pick to start the game.

Carolina is off for exams and holidays and returns to action in January with a bunch of home contests. They play West Chester Jan. 9 at 8:30 p.m.; Temple, Jan. 10, 10:15 p.m.; Jan. 24, Oregon, 3 p.m.; Jan. 25, Oregon at Fort Bragg, 11 a.m.; Jan. 30-31, Louisville 8:30 p.m. and 10:15 p.m.

## Upset Winner Fightin Squids

Allen & Son and Speakeasy Spirits battled for first place in Carrboro fall co-rec softball in the regular season. Fightin Squids, the third place finisher, swept in and beat the leaders for the championship, scoring seven runs in the last two innings knocking off Allen & Son 12-11 in the post-season finale.

Avery Wilder provided five hits with a double, two RBIs, 3 runs, and Reuben Norris and Joise Rosario homered. Matthew Moody had three hits, three runs for Allen & Son.

## City Winter Rec Programs

Chapel Hill is holding registration for four winter recreation programs—pickleball ladder, March-May; intro to pickleball, March and April; pickleball drills, March-May; adult beginner tennis, March and May. Use the web-trac.townofchapelhill.org website to sign up.

Starting March 3, registration opens for co-rec bocce league, April 7-June 9; coed volleyball league, April 8-May 27; pickleball ladder, April-June; pickleball doubles league, April-May.

## High End Courses Get New Owners

Two high end Wake County golf courses have new owners.

According to Triangle Business Journal, Bain Capital of Boston is acquiring private golf and club operator Concert Golf Partners of Lake Mary, FL, (39 properties across the country including McGregor Downs CC in Cary and the Club at 12 Oaks in Holly Springs) from Clearlake Capital as part of a \$1.3B deal, according to Bloomberg.

They originally acquired 12 Oaks (Jack Nicklaus-designed course) for \$4.25M in 2018 and bought McGregor Downs in 2014 for \$3.4M.

## Community News

A change.org petition to Durham Parks & Rec Dept. wants to extend pickleball hours by one to 9 p.m. at Piney Wood Park and had 253 signatures in mid November. Another petition wants to stop enactment of a wildlife feeding ban by the city council in Durham (538 signers).

## SKIERS, Continued from page 1

stability of season passes. Skiers bought passes and used them.

Nationally, resorts had 61.5M visitors, the second highest number ever despite below-average snowfall. The Pacific NW region had a record year but the Rocky Mountains (26.4M) reported fewer visits than the previous season. The total number was the fourth straight above 60M, Kottke reported.

Skier visits are only one measure of the resort industry's health. Visits used to count as a critical indicator for the resort industry, but with the widespread use of season passes in the past decade, skier traffic patterns have changed and the skier visit metric has lost its shine, according to the Colorado Sun.

A decade ago, about 38% of skiers used season passes. In recent seasons, that percentage has passed 50% but slipped a step to 49%.

Still, the past few seasons have seen lift-riding skiers hitting the hill about five to six times a season, suggesting that record-breaking visitation is being driven by a growing population of skiers and snowboarders, not just the same group going more often.

As December began, Beech, Hatley, Sapphire Valley opened, joining Appalachian, Sugar and Cataloochee operating in North Carolina. *Joel Bulkley*

# Orange Lightning Earns Gold At Fall SONC Tournament

Orange Lightning of Orange County brought home a gold in 7 a side soccer at N.C. Special Olympics Fall Tournament in Charlotte. Nearly 1,300 athletes and unified partners competed in seven sports. Orange athletes were entered in golf, soccer, tennis.

Here are local medalists:

**Tennis:** Chris Cordeiro/Michael Nager, bronze, doubles level 4/5; Chris Cordeiro, bronze, singles level 5; Markell Corwin, gold, singles level 5; Michael Nager, gold, singles level 5; Anna Zrubek, gold, singles level 4;

Corwin/Zrubek, silver, doubles level 4/5; Brian O'Donnell, Rubens Shundi, silver, singles level 2. Coach was TJ Smithers.

**Golf:** David Curtin, bronze, individual stroke play 18 level 5; Justin Jarmusz and Leo Jarmusz, bronze, level 2 alternate shot team play; Joey Kessler, bronze, level 4 individual stroke play 9; Ahmed Rehman, bronze, level 6 individual stroke play 18; Craig Stopa and Tyler Stopa, bronze, level 2 alternate shot team play. Coaches were unified partners or caddies for each team.



**Soccer:** Orange Lightning, gold, 7 a side, coached by Tim Mehringer; Orange Irrelevant Victory Juice, 7 a side, 4th place ribbon, coached by Mike Meyen and Chase Soloman.



## N.C. CX Series

Riders compete for points and prizes in the 29th annual N.C. Cyclocross Series in WNC. Top local finishers:

**Race 7:** Davidson, Luca Sherman, Carrboro, third M Jrs 13-14, (3 finishers); David Sherman, Chapel Hill, third M Jrs 12 (3); Chuck Gillis, Pittsboro, second M70+ Masters (2); John Paul Amalong, (UNC) Chapel Hill, second M Pro 1/2/3/ M Collegiate (16).

**Race 8:** Midland, Gillis, second M Masters 70+ (3); Alison Weidner, Chapel Hill, first F Masters 40+ (4).

**Race 9:** Hickory, Oliver Jensen, Chapel Hill, second M Cat 3/4 (11).

**Race 10:** Hendersonville, N.C. Grand Prix, Evan Myers, Chapel Hill, M Masters cat 4/5 (11); Peter Hartig, Hillsborough, second M Cat 4/5 Jrs 15-18 (4); Vivienne Myers, Chapel Hill, second F cat 4/5 Jrs 13-14 (4); Matthew Edwards (Brevard College), Chapel Hill, third M Collegiate B, (8); Lauren Zoerner, Chapel Hill, second F Pro cat 1/2 (17).

**Race 11:** Hendersonville, NC GP, V. Myers, Chapel Hill, first F cat 4/5 (3); Jesse West, Chapel Hill, third M Pro cat 1/2 Jr 17-18 (35); L. Zoerner, Chapel Hill, third F Pro cat 1/2 (25); C. Gillis, Pittsboro, third M Masters 70+ (2).

One race (double points) remains on the '25 schedule.

## Coaches Needed For Orange SONC Winter Sports

Orange County Special Olympics is looking for volunteer coaches for winter programs—basketball, competitive swimming, cheerleading, alpine skiing/snowboarding.

Register at Town of Chapel Hill Parks and Rec Department Volunteer roles page. Questions? Contact Colleen Lanigan, coordinator at 919-968-2810 or email [clanigan@townof-chapelhill.org](mailto:clanigan@townof-chapelhill.org). Registration ends soon.

There are seven divisions for basketball (1 Sat, 6 Sun); cheerleading Jan. 10-March 21, Sat, 10:30-11:30 a.m. at Hargraves Center; competitive swimming Jan. 15-May 24, Thu 6-7:10 p.m., 7:15-8:25, Chapel Hill Community Center; skiing/snowboarding, Dec-Feb (SONC will offer several training clinics on Sun/Mon at App Ski Mtn). SOOC will provide transportation to some clinics; sign up to get on the ski mailing list). Some sports will have games or tournaments.

Coaches need to commit to attending team practice each week.

All participants will be responsible for keeping our program athletes and volunteers healthy. Please do not attend any session if you feel unwell. We need to trust each other to create the safest and most fun recreational sports environment that we can, Lanigan said.

## Community News

A change.org petition to Durham Parks & Rec Dept. wants to extend pickleball hours by one to 9 p.m. at Piney Wood Park and had 253 signatures in mid November. Another petition wants to stop enactment of a wildlife feeding ban by the city council in Durham (538 signers).

New Year's Day mixed hat tournament Jan. 4 at 10 a.m. at Hooker Fields, UNC, is a fundraiser for Pleiades women's team. Cost is \$30/player, \$35 after Dec. 15. USA Ultimate membership required. Register at [trianglerultimate.org/e/2026](http://trianglerultimate.org/e/2026). Questions? Contact Lucy Tea at [unc.edu](mailto:unc.edu).

Tampa Bay Rays, parent club of the Durham Bulls, will return to The Trop for 2026 games after repairs to the roof and interior. They added a new video board, sound system and updated suites.

Animate Raleigh Jan. 9-11 at Raleigh Convention Center is still on. The center was hit with a fire Dec. 1. No one was injured. Inspections continue and repairs are next.

### Buy Local Every Day And Support Local Businesses

## How They Made World Cup Schedule

Henry Bushnell, [theathletic.com](http://theathletic.com)

Long after President Donald Trump and the Village People stopped dancing, as glitz subsided and most of the soccer world slept, more than a dozen FIFA executives huddled inside the Kennedy Center's River Pavilion and built the most complex World Cup schedule ever.

They began "the minute the last team was drawn" at Friday's World Cup draw, chief tournament officer Manolo Zubiria said, and ended sometime after 4 a.m.

They sat at tables strewn with Smartwaters and Topo Chicos, their eyes bouncing between several different screens, their brains buried in grids and spreadsheets.

As of around 2 p.m. Friday, they had 72 group-stage matchups but only 18 match locations and zero kickoff times.

By Saturday morning, they needed to place all 72 games in 16 cities across four time zones; and place four or six per day in unique broadcast windows that satisfied viewers worldwide but attracted local fans and avoided searing afternoon heat.

So, they quickly got to work. Zubiria, at times, stood at the head of the room in front of four big screens, flanked by two smaller ones that displayed the World Cup's 12 freshly minted groups.

At a front table was Heimo Schirgi, FIFA's World Cup chief operating officer. To his left was Peter Montopoli, the tournament's Canadian chief; and over to his right was Jurgen Mainka, Montopoli's counterpart in Mexico. There were ticketing gurus and G.B. Jones, the World Cup's security chief. There were experts in team services, broadcasting, medical and other fields. Amy Hopfinger, the World Cup's chief strategy and business officer, was also present.

All were there to keep sight of countless variables and, as Zubiria said, piece together the first 48-team World Cup "puzzle."

The first outlines of a schedule were sketched out before the 2026 format was even decided.

The vastness—it's around 2,000 miles from Toronto to Mexico City and more from Boston to Los Angeles—was the first problem that Zubiria and team set out to solve. In 2024, they settled on a schedule shell that would mostly keep teams in "regional clusters."

All will still have to fly. The 2026 spectacle will be the polar opposite of Qatar 2022, where all eight stadiums were within an hour drive of one another. But FIFA's working group mapped out itineraries, and crafted a group stage where only around half the 48 teams would have to travel more than 1,000 miles in total between their three matches, according to an Athletic analysis of the distance between host cities.

In reality, many will return to base camps between matches; the travel will still be grueling. But, for example, the four members of Group I—France, Senegal, Norway and an intercontinental playoff winner—will not have to leave the northeast. Egypt will not stray beyond the Pacific Northwest. Only two teams

—Canada and its first opponent—will require cross-country flights.

FIFA did not, though, want to keep anyone in a single location. The schedule's masterminds intentionally sprinkled in variety, in part to foster competitive equity.

"We looked at every team's path, and all the times that they played, to try to avoid repetitive games, to try to avoid teams even just playing all their games (under) a roof ... because that's an advantage over others," Zubiria told The Athletic.

As the final schedule's due date approached, however, for the first time in World Cup history, they did not have each matchup—say, C1 vs. C3—assigned to a specific stadium. They wanted to know the participating teams first, then assign them to hosts strategically. That is part of why an hours-long chore in years past became an all-night affair this weekend. It layered on complexity above and beyond the standard task of choosing kickoff times.

And that is why, as the draw neared, to prepare for this dizzying race against the clock, the FIFA group would simulate it.

They would run a mock draw, then piece together a schedule with whatever the simulator threw at them. The idea was to familiarize themselves with the many different variables, and practice making decisions that balanced all of them. They grew accustomed to some "likely outcomes" and "challenges that we would face when we actually had the real draw," Zubiria said.

So, when they gathered at the River Pavilion, underneath a curved ceiling, with curtains and shades shielding their view of the Potomac, with laptops and pieces of paper scattered around rectangular tables, they were as ready as they could be.

## Tips For Greener Holidays

**Send E-Cards**

Instead of paper cards, send e-cards. For parties, make an online event page to keep track of guests.

**DIY Décor**

Craft your own decorations, or visit your local thrift store. Save for next time.

**Rethink Gifts**

Give experiences like tickets and classes or quality items made to last.

**Plan Ahead**

Buy only what you need, share extras, and compost food scraps.

**Wrap It Smart**

Use paper, fabric, or bags you already have. Skip shiny or glitter paper that can't be recycled. Save to use next time.

**Ship It Right**

Choose regular shipping. Combine orders to save fuel and reduce waste.

**Shop Local & Used**

Buy local and used for unique gift giving. Support local farmers, too!

**Party Trash-Free**

Choose reusable silverware, cups, plates and napkins.

**Recycle Those Boxes**

Flatten those boxes and recycle them, or save and re-use.

ORANGE COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY
orangecountync.gov/Sustainability

## Figge Leads Birds of Feather 5K

Coen Figge (21:30) of Pittsboro took first at Birds of a Feather 5K Trail Trot at Briar Chapel. The women's winner was Claire Kowalczyk (25:06) of Chapel Hill (178 finishers, an increase from 134 in 2024).

Aidan Quigley (22:09) of Pittsboro was runner up and Worth Newman (23:11) of Chapel Hill third. Erica Joiner (27:27) of Pittsboro was second and Chris Tommerdahl (27:40) of Chapel Hill third.

Chapel Hill age group winners included Noel Neville, 14-19, 24:41; Connor Quinn, 20-29, 24:21; Susanne Sorico, 30-39, 30:52; Kari Van Hoy, 40-49, 35:57; Solomon Kobes, 50-59, 25:24; Diane Jacobs, 60-69, 38:05 and Douglas Beach, 38:09; Kathy Pettiss, 70+, 58:26.

In the 2 Miler, (97), winners were Coleman Mitchell (13:57) of Chapel Hill and Rebecca Donohue (15:51) of Baltimore, MD.

### Leftovers Trail Run 5K

Two days later Afsanul Raiman (27:48) of Bellerose, NY, and Elizabeth Boivin (28:43) of Cary were the winners at the first Leftovers Trail Run 5K (62 finishers) at Briar Chapel. Race leaders: Wesley Kumfer, Chapel Hill, 27:21, second and Gary Camilleri, Chapel Hill, 28:24, third; Natalie Smith, Chapel Hill, second, 29:01, and Hillary Leddy, Durham, 30:47, third.

Top three finishers at the 10K (52) were Claire Kowalczyk, Chapel Hill, 48:00, Chris Ray, Apex, 49:47, Kate Finnegar, Efland, 53:16.

## Morrell Wins Turkey Day 5K

Abbigayle Morrell (18:34) of Hillsborough was the women's winner at Fleet Feet Thanksgiving Day 5K in Durham. Men's WT was 16:55, with Alex Hill (17:03) of Hillsborough second. There were 616 finishers, up from 515 last year.

Local age group winners were Katrina Nunez, Chapel Hill, 20-24, 21:12; Caleb Wyninger, Hillsborough, 25-29, 18:08; Lindsay Maslow, Chapel Hill, 40-44, 24:47.

### 8K Results

WTs for the Thanksgiving Day 8K were 27:26 and 32:33 (115 finishers, up one from 2024).

Age group winners: Eva Kornbluth, Chapel Hill, 13-19, 38:44; Theresa Reece, 65-69, 47:00; David Hack, 70+, 43:50.

## Colley Third In Turkey 5K

Tristin Colley (18:12) of Chapel Hill took second at Trosa Turkey Trot 5K in Durham. WTs were 15:27 and 17:40 (1,629 finishers, compared to 859 last year).

Local age division winners included Angelica Carranga, Chapel Hill, 30-34, 21:45; Kathleen Walsh, Chapel Hill, 75-79, 37:49; Brian Noga, Hillsborough, 55-59, 24:05.

## Evans Second At Snow Camp

Katherine Evans (1:13:24) of Cedar Grove was second female and Teresa Chilton (1:14:20) of Efland third at Black Toenail Friday 7.5m trail in Snow Camp (66 finishers). WTs were 55:44 and 59:15.

WTs for the HM (33) were 1:55:31 and 2:04:38.

## Youngsters Lead Into The Woods 5K

Four of the top six finishers at Into the Woods 5K at Briar Chapel were youngsters. Coen Figge (17:38), age 18 of Pittsboro and Megan Leonard (19:14) age 13 of Moncure took first.

Creighton Irons (18:23 of Chapel Hill was second and Aidan O'Neil (18:51) age 14 of Pittsboro third. Katherine Kennedy (20:21) of Durham was second female and Nadezhda Podolyanskaya (23:11) age 13 of Chapel Hill third.

Age group winners from Chapel Hill: Nikoly Podalyanskiy, 23:50, 15-20; Eryn cDillard, 26:00, 21-40; Dori Baboolal, 26:31, and Ben Gay, 23:23, 41-49; Tracy Kasten, 27:49, and Jason Figge, Pittsboro, 22:18, 50-59; Diane Jacobs, 33:17, and Justin Waller, 25:55, 60+.

## Ploeger Third In Gate City

Rose Ploeger (1:19:01) of Chapel Hill was third woman overall at the Greensboro HM. WT was 1:17:40 (541 finishers, up from 515 last year).

Martha Hamblin of Mebane was second 65-69, 37:06, in the 5K (344). WT was 20:20.

## Running News

Katherine Evans (2:03:02) of Cedar Grove was the women's winner at Goose Creek Trail Run HM in Washington (56 finishers).

Orlando Roberson, Chapel Hill, was first 25-29, 1:22:06, at Stars Stripes & Strides 15K in Cary (10). WT was 1:00:24.

Megan Leonard (18:38) of Moncure was the women's leader at Heister Cares 5K in Fuquay-Varina (216). Jason Leonard was first 40-49, 21:08.

Sara Flynn-Loy (21:50) of Mebane was the women's winner at Run the Fort 5K in Atlantic Beach (113).

Chapel Hill runners Ariel Kopelove (36:01) 20-29 and Dylan McGinty (18:25) 15-19 were age division winners at 16th Durham Academy Turkey Trot 5K in Durham ((288).

Yahei Hisada (18:42) of Chapel Hill was second 35-39 and Larissa Biggers (1:55:04) first 55-59 at Raleigh Holiday HM (437 finishers, down from 503 last year). WTs were 1:07:08 and 1:14:28.

## Joy Leads Strides For Stem 5K

Mary Joy (21:37) of Durham was the first finisher at Strides for Stem 5K in Chapel Hill (38 finishers). Christopher Brache (23:56) of Chapel Hill was the men's winner, with Stephen Allan (24:10) of Durham second and Ryan Cooper (24:53) of Durham third.

Carli Opland (30:00) of Chapel Hill was second woman and Kaitlyn Huizar (30:46) of Carrboro third.

## Holly Springs HM

Chapel Hill runners earned three awards at Holly Springs HM: Kierstan Keith-Pedersen, second 20-29, 1:56:31; Julian Isnard, second 30-39, 1:24:41; Francisco Albarnoz, second 60-69, 1:54:44. WTs were 1:14:18 and 1:33:05 (447 finishers, up 10 from 2024).

Paul Dubbeling (43:35) of Chapel Hill was third male in the 5K (166). WTs were 40:10 and 49:46. Kyle Coleman was first 20-29, 45:13, and Valerie Murrah, first 70-79, 1:45:42.

## Battleship HM

John Sexton (1:22:40) of Chapel Hill was the first masters male at Battleship HM in Wilmington. WTs were 1:11:05 and 1:19:44 (1,241 finishers, up from 1,048 last year).

Emma Hauser, Chapel Hill, was second 25-29, 1:38:52, and Theresa Reece, Chapel Hill, third 65-69, 2:16:31.

In the 10K, Cassidy Sexton, Chapel Hill, was second 18&U, 49:14. WT was 34:44 (577).

## Hillsborough Turkey 5K

Top finishers at Hillsborough Turkey Trot 5K: Eli Muskowitz, first male, 16:24; Nick Epstein, second, 16:32; Grant Schmidt, third, 16:55; Merritt Sperry, first woman, 19:52; Eva Nagel, second, 21:08; Adalyn Muskowitz, third, 22:08. There were an estimated 450 finishers. The race, sponsored by Hillsborough Running Club, had no registration or entry fee.

## Straub Second In HM

Matt Straub (1:23:13) of Chapel Hill was second male and Erica Bunn (1:36:07) of Pittsboro third woman at Durham 13.1 HM (194 finishers, down from 405 in 2024). WTs were 1:22:12 and 1:33:49.

Chapel Hill award winners: Catherine Kayleigh Warlick, first 20-24, 1:48:33; Audrey Becker, Carrboro, seconds, 1:50:37, Catherine Sauter, third, 1:50:57; Ethan Rue, third 25-29, 1:48:23; Megan Wright, Hillsborough, third 25-29, 1:46:55; Erik Macintosh, Mebane, second 35-39, 1:31:18; Tanelle Smith, Pittsboro, first 40-44, 1:43:58; Sarah Roberts, second, 1:44:10; Leigh Jania, second 45-49, 1:43:45; Sherry Luo, first 50-54, 1:32:13; Leah Boucher, first 55-59, 1:41:37; Jie Xu, third, 1:51:08; Michael Barrett, Hillsborough, second 60-64, 1:55:36; Karen Alexander, first 60-64, 2:03:07; Edward Lamay, first 65-69, 1:51:02.

## Gallop & Gorge 8K

Ohio runners topped the field at Gallop & Gorge 8K in Carrboro, final race in Tour de Carrboro. Winners were Tyler Clark (24:36) of Chagrin Falls, OH, and Sarah Jane Kerwin (28:50) of Oberlin, OH. There were 1,716 finishers on Thanksgiving morning, up from 1,439 last year.

Michael Harris (25:49) of Durham was second and Wyatt Benjamin (26:42) of Chapel Hill third. Samantha Rueckes (28:58) of Chapel Hill finished second and Sydney Bagus (30:47) of Durham third.

Masters leaders were Audie McRae (27:11) of New York City, Victor Ornelas (27:32) and Marc Jeuland (28:48), both of Chapel Hill; Emily Boles (31:04) of Greensboro, Heather Lindenman (33:15) and Natalie Bowman (38:02) of Chapel Hill.

Emile Charles (38:47) of Chapel Hill was first Clydesdale, Brian Glish (39:13) of Chapel Hill second and David Levintow (41:41) of Durham third. Athena winner was Cara James (43:48) of Durham, with Meghan Cobell (48:39) of Arlington, VA, second and Alexa Wojnovich (51:22) of Chapel Hill third.

Chapel Hill age group award winners:

15-19, Raine Honeycutt, 33:05, first, Annelie Reyes, Carrboro, third, 35:45; Elliott Ferris, 27:19, first, Sammy Kurz, Carrboro, 30:34, second, Cooper Nicholson, 30:47, third.

20-24, Virginia Pridgen, Carrboro, 32:57, Holden Levin, 34:34, second, Lizzie Mabe, Carrboro, 35:55, third; Thomas Joyce, Carrboro, 26:50, first, Frank Wagoner, Pittsboro, 28:38, second, Hank Neal, Carrboro, 28:42, third.

25-29, Elise Deshasses, 33:19, second, Roddie Kerwin, Carrboro, 35:07, third; Andrew Zachman, 27:27, first, Neal Duncan, 27:27, second.

30-34, Matthew Sutcliffe, Carrboro, 29:00, second.

35-39, Erica Bunn, Pittsboro, 34:52, second, Hayley White, Carrboro, 36:15, third; Yohei Hisada, 28:04, first, Matt Staub, Carrboro, 29:18, second.

40-44, Jennifer Chu, 35:19, second, Abigail Jeck, 36:25, third; Creighton Irons, 30:01, second, Reid Draeger, 31:40 third.

45-49, Lisa Dunn, Carrboro, 39:30, first, Ivy Pointer, 34:46, second, Tracy Harris, 36:58, third; Richard O'Brien 30:29, second, Drew Kelley, 33:52, third.

50-54, Amy King, 36:56, first; David Mabe, Carrboro, 30:36, second, Tim Salemy, Carrboro, 34:04, third.

55-59, Larissa Biggers, 37:46, first, Joanna Younts, 37:41, second, Natalie Fowler, 39:08, third; Robert Benjamin, 30:44, first, Xuezhong Cai, 34:06, second, Marc Desoreau, 34:10, third.

60-64, Cyndy Weeks, Carrboro, 38:41, first, Christine Cotton, 40:31, third; Paul Dupper, Carrboro, 35:33, second.

65-69, Dana Lebo, 40:40, first, Laura DeWald, Carrboro, 44:21, second, Julee Waldrop, Carrboro, 44:44, third; David Hardy, Carrboro, 38:28, second, Don Rose, 39:28, third.

70-74, Sheila Kerrigan, 58:28, first, Joanne Gardner, 59:49, second, Susan Wolf, 1:03:27, third; Yongsung Lim, 37:56, first.

75-79, Cecile Skrzynia, 1:12:58, second, Marion Haywood, 1:19:17, second; John Northern, 43:39, first, James Paisner, Carrboro, 58:56, second.

80+, Sharon Roggenbuck, Hillsborough, 1:15:45, first; Andrew Coughlin, 48:51, third.

## Gibson-Aarnio Leads 8ish Trail

Carina Gibson-Aarnio (1:06:56) of Chapel Hill was the women's winner at 16th Chestnut Ridge Trail 8ish miler in Efland. Men's winner was Matt Kearney (53:52) of Mount Olive. There were 44 finishers, down from 62 last year.

Chapel Hill award winners: Lisa Porterfield, first 50-58, 1:17:58; Korinn Saker, Hillsborough, first 60-69, 1:33:24; Patrick Soher, first 19&, 1:01:06; Colin Thompson, second 30-39, 56:37; Jeffrey Glick, first 40-49, 58:53; Keith Houch, first 60-69, 1:22:33, Owen Astrachan, second, 1:24:55.

### 4ish Miler

M. Vitucci (30:30) of Hillsborough and Katherine Evans (34:46) of Cedar Grove took first at Chestnut Ridge Trail 4ish miler (103 finishers, up 5 from 2024).

Award winners from Chapel Hill included Alivia Carotenuto, Hillsborough, second 15-19, 47:37, Lyra Myers, third, 47:47; Brittany Laube, Hillsborough, second 30-39, 38:14, Sarah Brody, third, 39:27; Brika Eklund, Hillsborough, second 40-49, 42:43, Nicole Harkins, Mebane, third, 45:38; Elizabeth Skiba, first 50-59, 35:36, Tiffany Shubert, second, 37:21, Misty Altgizer, Hillsborough, third, 45:10; Kari Wilkinson, Mebane, first 60-69, 47:48, Lauren Mangili, second, 51:28, Susan Rogers, Hillsborough, third, 53:59; Kelly Pettiss, first 70+, 1:10:52; Joan Boone, Efland, second, 1:15:54, Marion Haywood, third, 1:18:34.

Also, Aidan McDuffie, Mebane, first 15-19, 31:45, Eaden Wright, second, 37:36; Ben Whitten, Mebane, second 30-39, 31:39, David McDuffie, Mebane, first 40-49, 32:38, James "Alex" Palmer, Hillsborough, second, 38:12; Brian Harry, Efland, first 50-59, 42:25, Josh Hinson, second, 45:34; Michael Wilkinson, Mebane, first 60-69, 44:08; Ed Pettiss, second 70+, 52:12, Mike Mangill, third, 1:16:22.

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## Ski Conditions

For snow conditions for Tar Heel and SE region ski resorts, weather reports, driving conditions, check [skisoutheast.com](http://skisoutheast.com) website. It's independently owned, and updated every morning with info regarding skiing, snowboarding, tubing, terrain parks, operating hours, special events and has links to individual resorts.



## North Carolina Ski Resorts

**APPALACHIAN SKI MOUNTAIN**, 940 Ski Mountain Rd. off US 321 near Blowing Rock, state's oldest resort, 13 slopes, 6 lifts, vertical drop 365, longest run 0.5m, snowboarding, 3 terrain parks, ice arena, tubing, night skiing, 239-503-1759, [appskimtn.com](http://appskimtn.com). ASM is cashless.

**CATALOOCHEE SKI AREA**, off I-40 at Maggie Valley, 18 slopes, 5 lifts, vertical drop 740, longest run 1.4m, night skiing, boarding, 2 terrain parks, tubing. Normally first resort to open and last to close, 800-768-0285, snow report 800-768-3588, [cataloochee.com](http://cataloochee.com).

**BEECH MOUNTAIN SKI RESORT**, off NC 184 north of Banner Elk, 17 slopes, 8 lifts, vertical drop 830, longest run 1m, snowboarding, night skiing, terrain and snow tubing parks, skating, Highest ski area in eastern NA. 800-438-2093, [beechmountainresort.com](http://beechmountainresort.com). Terrain park with 50 features.

**SAPPHIRE VALLEY**, off US 64 east of Cashiers in Sapphire, 2 slopes, 3 lifts, vertical drop 200, Frozen Falls Terrain Park, tubing, night skiing, recreation center with pool. Normally open Friday-Monday only, 828-743-7663, [skisapphirevalley.com](http://skisapphirevalley.com).

**SUGAR MOUNTAIN**, on NC184 west of Boone, state's largest ski area (125 acres), with largest vertical drop (1200), longest run 1.5m, 21 slopes, 9 lifts, night skiing, terrain park, tubing, ice skating, snowshoeing, guided tours, 800-784-2768, [skisugar.com](http://skisugar.com), home of NASTAR races.

**HATLEY POINTE** (formerly Wolf Ridge) on US 23 north of Mars Hill, 15 slopes, 5 lifts, vertical drop 700, night skiing, terrain park, tubing, 828-689-4111, [hatleypointe.com](http://hatleypointe.com).

### Tubing Only

**HAWKSNEST**, off NC 105 south of Boone in Seven Devils, 4 areas for tubing with 30 lanes, 400-1,000 feet with moving carpet lifts, vertical drop 190, zipline tours. Largest tubing park on the East Coast, snowmaking. 828-963-6561, [hawksnesttubing.com](http://hawksnesttubing.com). Sessions are 1:45.

**SCALY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR CENTER**, on NC 106 SW of Highlands, just north of Georgia line, tubing, ice skating, vertical drop 225. Open 6 days a week, 828-526-3737, [highlandsoutpost.com](http://highlandsoutpost.com).

**JONAS RIDGE Snow Tubing Park** at Mast Farm Inn, off NC181South, Newland, 6 lanes with different speeds and uphill conveyor belt. Open Fri-Mon, 828-733-4155, [jonasridgesnowtube.com](http://jonasridgesnowtube.com). Closed Christmas Day.

**MOONSHINE MOUNTAIN Snow Tubing**, 5865 Willow Rd., Hendersonville, 828-696-0333, snow tubing hill with man-made snow, 500 feet. Open Fri-Sun and holidays. Cash only, ATM on site. Closed Christmas Day. No skiing or snowboarding.

**TUBE WORLD**, Hwy. 19 across from Ghost Town in the Sky, Maggie Valley, 828-926-0285. Sessions are 1:45. Located 4m from Cataloochee Ski Area.

## Roll Back Endangered Species Act, Trump Says

The Trump administration moves to narrow protections for endangered species and the places they live, reviving an effort begun in his first term. The changes include the elimination of the Fish and Wildlife Service's "blanket rule" that automatically protects animals and plants newly classified as threatened. Government agencies instead would have to craft species-specific rules for protections, a potentially lengthy process.

Environmentalists warned the changes could cause years-long delays in efforts to save species such as the monarch butterfly, Florida manatee, California spotted owl and North American wolverine.

"We would have to wait until these poor animals are almost extinct before we can start protecting them. That's absurd and heartbreaking," said Stephanie Kurose with the Center for Biological Diversity.

The proposals come as extinctions have accelerated globally because of habitat loss and climate pressures. Prior proposals during Trump's second term would revise the definition of "harm" under the Endangered Species Act and potentially bypass species protections for logging projects in national forests and on public lands.

## International Visitors Hit Hard by Park Fees

The National Park Service announced "America-first" price increases for foreign visitors.

In 2026, the NPS will start charging foreign visitors a \$100 surcharge to enter the 11 most popular national parks.

The parks' highest-tier pass, which grants access to all national parks and federal recreation lands, will cost \$170 more for nonresidents than for U.S. citizens.

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## Winter Sports

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## Outdoor Notes

### INDOOR SHOWS

Here are some regional winter indoor shows:

Jan. 9-11, Bass and Saltwater Fishing Expo, 130+ vendors, State Fairgrounds, Raleigh.

Jan. 30-Feb. 1, Fayetteville Fishing Expo, Crown Complex, Fayetteville.

Feb. 20-22, Central Carolina Boat Show, First Horizon Coliseum, Greensboro.

### BIRDWATCHING

Birdwatching at Cane Creek Reservoir continues Wednesdays 7 to 11 a.m. through March at the reservoir off NC54 west of Carrboro. Free. It's an eBird hotspot that boasts sightings of nearly 200 bird species generated from approximately 800 checklists, says Audubon North Carolina. A visitor reported seeing 20 species on a late November trip.

### MULCH SALE

Orange County Landfill on Eubanks Road, Chapel Hill, has a mulch sale (\$20 for 3 cubic yard scoop) through Dec. 31. Delivery available for \$75 within 11 miles, \$95 for 11+, max 20.

### FOREST PAYBACK

NC DOT needed truckloads of stone to rebuild the roadbed of I-40 in the Pigeon River Gorge near the NC/Tenn border washed away by Hurricane Helene. They'll get them from a temporary 40-acre quarry in nearby Pisgah National Forest.

In return, DOT agreed to purchase 1,057 acres in three parcels wanted by the U.S. Forest Service, create nine new road crossings/tunnels for wildlife and animals and build a new bridge in the forest to make the PNF "whole again." The agreement was signed by both parties in September.

The state is rebuilding four miles of the eastbound lanes and needs 3 million cubic yards of stone. The Federal Highway Administration will pay for most of the \$1.36 billion rebuilding project, expected to be completed in 2028.

### CWD CONFIRMED

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission confirmed test results for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a male white-tail deer taken in Edgecombe County (CSN, Nov 25). No changes will be made in the current deer season, officials said, but there will be increased testing in Edgecombe and surrounding counties.

### ARBOR DAY

The Hillsborough Tree Board planted a southern red oak at the Dorothy N. Johnson Community Center in the Fairview community. The board chose an oak tree because it provides habitat for more than 500 types of caterpillars, which birds need to feed their young.

## Wintergreen Monthly Day Bus Trips Planned

C&R Ski Outdoor of Hillsborough has scheduled three one-day bus trips to Wintergreen Resort in Virginia.

Dates are Jan. 21, Feb. 8, March 3. Cost is \$149 for standard (transportation and lift ticket). The plus special (\$174) includes standard and ski/snowboard equipment rental. Sunday trip (Feb. 8) costs \$20 more for standard or plus.

Meet at 5 a.m. at C&R, bus leaves at 5:30, returns 8-9 p.m. that night after stopping for dinner. Sign up online or in-store. Contact [candrski.com](http://candrski.com) or 919-732-9712.

## Winterplace, Snowshoe Get Readers' Awards

Winterplace resort in Ghent, WVA, was ranked third best place for both snowtubing and best ski school in USAToday Readers' Choice Awards 2025.

Wintergreen Resort in VA was fifth, Snowshoe Mountain, WVA, tenth in snow tubing; Camelback Resort, Tannersville, PA, was first and Blue Mountain Resort, Palmerton, PA, second.

Ernie Blade Snowsports School, Taos Valley, NM, was ranked best ski school and Hidden Valley Resort, PA, second.

Overall best ski resorts, according to Readers' Choice, were Snowbasin Resort, Huntsville, UT, first and Smugglers' Notch, Jeffersonville, VT, second.

## Top Adventure Towns

Large Town, Asheville, NC, in readers' vote by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine. Asheville was described as a basecamp for adventure in every direction. Runners up: Roanoke, VA. Lynchburg, VA.

Midsized, Charlottesville, VA.; runners up: Boone, NC, Greenville, SC.

Small Town, Brevard, NC; runners up: Abingdon, VA., Bedford, VA.

Tiny Town, Floyd Va.; runners up: Blowing Rock, NC, Cherokee, NC.

## Winter X Games Return To Aspen

Winter X Games will be held Jan. 23-25 at Buttermilk Mountain in Aspen, CO, for the 25th time.

Featured will be:

Snowboard: Superpipe, Big Air, Slopestyle, Knuckle Huck.

Ski: Superpipe, Big Air, Slopestyle, Knuckle Huck.

Snowmobile: Speed & Style, Freestyle.

Events will be broadcast on ESPN networks.

## Odds & Ends

January is Learn to ski or snowboard month with some resorts offering clinics or discounted instruction. Be sure to ask ... SugarFest Dec. 12-14 at Sugar Mountain will have equipment deals, pre-season ski clinic, after-ski party and fireworks, food specials ... Raleigh Ski & Outing Club is active in downhill skiing with regional, national and international trips, club racing team and outdoor programs. Check the club's Facebook or website for details. Call 919-803-3300...

## ACC Hoops Midterm Grades

Coming in February issue

### UPCOMING CSN ISSUES:

Jan. 14, Winter Sports

Feb. 18, Spring Running, ACC Hoops Midterm Grades

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## Carrboro Film Fest Jan. 23-25

The 20th edition of the Carrboro Film Fest featuring new Southern film will be held Jan. 23-25 at the Drakeford Library Complex downtown. They have 44 films—alphabetically from “A City That Cares” to “Whompin”—that will “entertain you, make you laugh, make you cry, make you think.”

Early bird festival passes (\$35) are on sale at FilmFree-way.com. Individual film tickets go on sale 12/15. For more information check the carrborofilmfest.org website.

## Holiday Hoops

The 53rd John Wall Holiday Invitational will be played Dec. 26-30, with boys games at Broughton HS and girls at Southeast Raleigh HS. Admission is charged.

The Battle in the Bull Holiday Invitational prep tourney will be held Dec. 29-31 at Falls Lake Academy. Admission charged.

## Community News

ACC football teams are going international. North Carolina opens the 2026 season against TCU in Dublin, Ireland, Aug. 29. N.C. State plays Virginia in a conference game Aug. 29 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Games will be broadcast by ESPN.

Organizational meeting for Triangle Dart League spring season will be held Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. at The Tavern, Durham. LOD follows.

Chapel Hill has swim and climb with Santa holiday events. Check WebTrac.com for details on time slots available.

ACC women's basketball is struggling. They went 3-13 against the SEC. No Wake for BC. Last year they fell 10-6.

## Holiday Events

### Parades

13, Durham Holiday Parade, 10 a.m.,  
13, Cary Jaycees Christmas Parade, 2 p.m.  
14, Pittsboro Holiday Parade, 3 p.m.

### Holiday Train Show

The second Holiday Model Train Show takes place at Durham County Main Library downtown on select dates. The show will be open 10-12:30 and 1:30-5 Dec. 16-20, 22-23, 27-31, Jan. 2-3, 5.

## Football Championships

Here's the lineup for N.C. High School Football Championships:

Kenan Stadium, UNC, Dec. 11, 4 p.m., 1A, Wilson Prep v. Robbinsville; Dec. 11, 8 p.m., 7A, Millbrook v. Hough; Dec. 12, 4 p.m., 6A, Middle Creek v. Watauga; Dec. 12, 8 p.m., 7A, Clayton v. Grimsley.

Durham Co. Stadium, Durham, Dec. 13, 2 p.m., 3A, Kinston v. Shelby; Dec. 13, 8 p.m., 5A, Hunt v. Crest.

Lenoir Rhyne, Dec. 11, 5 p.m. 2A, Tarboro v. Murphy; Dec. 13, 11 a.m., 4A, Reidsville v. Brevard.

Tickets at the gate.

## ACC Bowl Games

### December

19, Gasparilla, Tampa, NC State v. Memphis., 2:30 p.m., ESPN.  
20, CFP, Miami at Texas A&M., 12 noon, ESPN/ABC.  
23, Boca Raton, Boca Raton, Fla., Louisville v. Toledo, 4 p.m., ESPN.  
24, Hawaii, Honolulu, California v. Hawaii, 8 p.m., ESPN.  
27, Pinstripe, New York, Clemson v. Penn State, 12 noon, ABC.  
27, Go Bowling Military, Annapolis, Pitt v. East Carolina, 11 a.m., ESPN.  
27, Pop-Tarts, Orlando, Georgia Tech v. BYU, 3:30 p.m., ABC.  
27, Gator, Jacksonville, Virginia v. Missouri, 7:30 p.m., ABC.  
31, Sun, El Paso, Duke v. Arizona State, 2 p.m., CBS.

### January

2, Mayo, Charlotte, Wake Forest v. Mississippi State, 8 p.m., ESPN.  
2, Holiday, San Diego, SMU v. Arizona. Fox.

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# Another View, Mine John Nieman



As any regular visitor to this space can expect, I eagerly look forward to any World Cup. Particularly when it's played in a region where the time zones allow us to watch at reasonable hours.

And so I took the time last Friday to watch the World Cup draw on Fox. That was a mistake. The spectacle made me ashamed of my sport and ashamed of my country.

Now we all know that FIFA is a corrupt organization. That's something that we as soccer fans have learned to accept and move on. There was hope some years ago when officials were arrested and prosecuted that there could be some relief. But when insider Infantino was made the new president we just kind of shrugged it off and went on. The beauty of the game has always outshone the corruption of the organization.

But I just can't ignore what is going on with Gianni Infantino and Donald Trump. What possible hold does this lame duck president have over the leader of the largest sports organization in the world?

I anticipated The Draw was going to be bad since there was no doubt that this ridiculous peace prize was going to be given to Trump. I was hopeful that it was just going to be presented in a way that made it clear FIFA was just handing him a tribute, so he wouldn't interfere with international fans coming to the tournament.

But no, that would certainly not do. Between the absurdly fawning video and Infantino's nose more brown than Pam Bondi could ever aspire, the event unfortunately exceeded all expectations.

Of course, all of that diverted attention from the fact that they refused to find a Mexican athlete to participate in the draw and Wayne Gretzky showed up apparently drunk.

To my mind, the only person on the stage who exhibited the needed class and respect for the occasion was Shaquille O'Neal. Who would have thought?

And, of course, the show ended with the Village People performing YMCA.

What in the name of all that is holy did Trump threaten in order to receive this massive stroke to his ego?

The overall tepid reception from the assembled audience was the only glimmer of hope I could find.

From the perspective of the show organizers, the draw—the reason a billion people were watching—was just a side issue. But let's discuss.

Let's get the details out of the way. The tournament is divided into twelve groups of four. The nations in each group will play each other once. The top two teams in each group will advance along with the eight most successful third place teams. There are many other factors, but the most important is that the four top-rated teams, Spain, France, England and Argentina, cannot meet until the semifinals.

And there are six teams yet to be determined, who will participate in playoffs in March. These playoff teams include Italy, Turkiye and other countries that can certainly compete and so it is probably still early for real prognostication.

But some observations can be made.

Because of the expansion to 48 teams, there doesn't seem to be a real Group of Death. Norway was the Pot 3 team no one wanted to draw. They ended up in Group I with France, Senegal, and a playoff team, so that may be the closest thing to a Group of Death.

Canada got a bit of a sting when Gretzky pulled out the ball containing the playoff group which includes Italy, but the other teams in their group are Qatar and Switzerland.

Some have said Group L—England, Croatia, Ghana and Panama—constitute a possible Group of Death, but I believe it will be merely competitive for the second spot and that England will certainly go through.

There is great hope for the US Men's National Team, who have much improved over the past few months. There really appears to be a team ethos and purpose. We can only hope that it will continue into next summer. Their group draw was certainly tough but fair with Australia, Paraguay, and a playoff team that will most likely be Turkiye.

Given the expansion to 48 teams, the stronger teams will most likely advance to the knockout stages. This includes the home nations Mexico, Canada and the US. With the top four teams in four different brackets, the chance for advancement increases. While it is unlikely that any of the home nations will win the tournament, all of the three should get to the knockout stage, and any or all could reach the quarterfinals.

Unfortunately, with the corruption and brown-nosing we saw at The Draw, real success by the US team could be tainted.

Just kidding?

After the playoffs in March, I'll do a deep dive into predictions, but sitting here now and given the format, it is hard to pick against Spain, France, England and Argentina in the semis.

And my beloved daughter in law, Stephanie, has secured tickets and hotel room for a World Cup game in Atlanta. Due to the family I was lucky enough to be born into and acquire, I'm the luckiest guy in the world.

Took my first dose of GLP1 under Martha's supervision last night. We shall see what we shall see. *Fat Boy Index: 291.*

# Media Sportswatch Joel Bulkley

Some nuts & bolts about the World Cup. Fox and FS1 (English), Telemundo and Universo (Spanish), will broadcast WC games in the U.S. There are 104 games; Fox has 69, FS1 35. They will be streamed on Fox One/Fox Sports App, Peacock, Fubo, YouTube TV, Sling, Hulu and others.

Globally, FIFA.com and FIFA's YouTube channel are key, with specific broadcasters like Canada's TSN or the UK's BBC/ITV holding rights in other regions.

Some additions to the Fox broadcast crew: former French star Thierry Henry will be an analyst and NBC studio EPL host Rebecca Lowe will be a WC host.

Good stuff I've seen—an NBC tribute to player/coach/broadcaster John Madden at halftime on Thanksgiving; various tributes to Willis Whichard of Durham, a former UNC alumni leader, conservationist, legislator, judge credited with helping get the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) passed in Raleigh to oversee coastal construction; a WRAL TV report on the impact of fall Nor'easters on the OBX. The loss of beach sand and coastline in volume was equivalent to 800 dump trucks over five weeks.

Basketball winning percentages at UNC—Dean Smith. Strange stuff. Panthers ranked #25 on the NFLPA report card. Miami was first. The NFL filed a grievance against the players' association about the survey rating how teams treat players, families, etc.

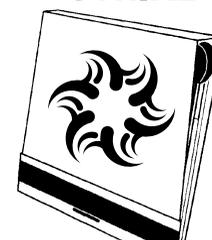
UNC and Duke played basketball on Thanksgiving Day.

North Carolina had 5.49M viewers on Fox, peaking at 13.4M between 4:30 and 4:45 p.m. following the Green Day/Detroit NFL game. UNC lost to Michigan State in Florida.

Duke had 6.81M viewers on CBS, the most watched hoops game since Purdue/Indiana in 1993, following the Dallas/Kansas City NFL game. Duke beat Arkansas in Chicago. The football game drew 57M.

The previous top-rated college game (Michigan State/Arizona, 5.18M) followed the NFL Turkey Day game on Fox two years ago. Last season UNC/Duke games were two of the top five.

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# World Cup Groups

**Group A:** Mexico, Korea Republic, South Africa, UEFA Playoff D (Denmark/North Macedonia/Czechia/Republic of Ireland)

**Group B:** Canada, Switzerland, Qatar, UEFA Playoff A (Italy/Northern Ireland/Wales/Bosnia and Herzegovina)

**Group C:** Brazil, Morocco, Scotland, Haiti

**Group D:** USA, Australia, Paraguay, UEFA Playoff D (Turkiye/Romania/Slovakia/Kosovo)

**Group E:** Germany, Ecuador, Ivory Coast, Curacao

**Group F:** Netherlands, Japan, Tunisia, UEFA Playoff B (Sweden/Ukraine/Poland/Albania)

**Group G:** Belgium, Iran, Egypt, New Zealand

**Group H:** Spain, Uruguay, Saudi Arabia, Cabo Verde

**Group I:** France, Senegal, Norway, Intercontinental Playoff 2 (Iraq/Bolivia/Suriname)

Group J: Argentina, Austria, Algeria, Jordan

**Group K:** Portugal, Colombia, Uzbekistan, Intercontinental Playoff 1 (DR Congo/Jamaica/New Caledonia)

**Group L:** England, Croatia, Panama, Ghana

*\*\*Playoffs will be decided in March*

## FIFA World Cup 26 Schedule

### Group Stage

June 11, 2026

Group A: Mexico vs. South Africa – Estadio Azteca, Mexico City (3 p.m. ET)

Group A: South Korea vs. UEFA playoff winner D – Estadio Akron, Guadalajara (10 p.m. ET)

June 12

Group B: Canada vs. UEFA playoff winner A – BMO Stadium, Toronto (3 p.m. ET)

Group D: USA vs. Paraguay – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (9 p.m. ET)

June 13

Group C: Brazil vs. Morocco – MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey (6 p.m. ET)

Group D: Australia vs. UEFA playoff winner C – BC Place, Vancouver (12 a.m. ET)

Group C: Haiti vs. Scotland – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (9 p.m. ET)

Group B: Qatar vs. Switzerland – Levi’s Stadium, Santa Clara, California (3 p.m. ET)

June 14

Group E: Germany vs. Curacao – NRG Stadium, Houston (1 p.m. ET)

Group E: Ivory Coast vs. Ecuador – Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (7 p.m. ET)

Group F: Netherlands vs. Japan – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (4 p.m. ET)

Group F: UEFA playoff B vs. Tunisia – Estadio BBVA, Monterrey (10 p.m. ET)

June 15

Group H: Spain vs. Cape Verde – Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (3 p.m. ET)

Group H: Saudi Arabia vs. Uruguay – Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (6 p.m. ET)

Group G: Belgium vs. Egypt – Lumen Field, Seattle (3 p.m. ET)

Group G: Iran vs. New Zealand – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (7 p.m. ET)

June 16

Group I: France vs. Senegal – MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey (3 p.m. ET)

Group I: FIFA playoff winner 2 vs. Norway – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Mass. (6 p.m. ET)

Group J: Argentina vs. Algeria – Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City (9 p.m. ET)

Group J: Austria vs. Jordan – Levi’s Stadium, Santa Clara, California (12 a.m. ET)

June 17

Group L: England vs. Croatia – T&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (1 p.m. ET)

Group L: Ghana vs. Panama – BMO Stadium, Toronto (10 p.m. ET)

Group K: Portugal vs. FIFA playoff winner 1 – NRG Stadium, Houston (1 p.m. ET)

Group K: Uzbekistan vs. Colombia – Estadio Azteca, Mexico City (10 p.m. ET)

June 18

Group A: UEFA playoff D winner vs. South Africa – Atlanta (12 p.m. ET)

Group A: Mexico vs. South Korea – Estadio Akron, Guadalajara (9 p.m. ET)

Group B: Switzerland vs. UEFA playoff winner A – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (3 p.m. ET)

Group B: Canada vs. Qatar winner – BC Place, Vancouver (6 p.m. ET)

June 19

Group C: Brazil vs. Haiti – Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (9 p.m. ET)

Group C: Scotland vs. Morocco – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (6 p.m. ET)

Group D: UEFA playoff C winner vs. Paraguay - San Fransico Bay Area (12 a.m. ET)

Group D: USA vs. Australia – Lumen Field, Seattle (3 p.m. ET)

June 20

Group E: Germany vs. Ivory Coast – BMO Stadium, Toronto (4 p.m. ET)

Group E: Ecuador vs. Curacao – Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City(8 p.m. ET)

Group F: Netherlands vs. UEFA playoff B winner – NRG Stadium, Houston (1 p.m. ET)

Group F: Tunisia vs. Japan – Estadio BBVA, Monterrey (12 a.m. ET)

June 21

Group H: Spain vs. Saudi Arabia – Atlanta (12 p.m. ET)

Group H: Uruguay vs. Cape Verde – Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (6 p.m. ET)

Group G: Belgium vs. Iran – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (3 p.m. ET)

Group G: New Zealand vs. Egypt – BC Place, Vancouver (9 p.m. ET)

June 22

Group I: France vs. FIFA playoff 2 winner – Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (5 p.m. ET)

Group I: Norway vs. Senegal – MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey (8 p.m. ET)

Group J: Argentina vs. Austria – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (1 p. m. ET)

Group J: Jordan vs. Algeria – Levi’s Stadium, Santa Clara, California (10 p.m. ET)

June 23

Group L: England vs. Ghana – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (4 p.m. ET)

Group L: Panama vs. Croatia – BMO Stadium, Toronto (4 p.m. ET)

Group K: Portugal vs. Uzbekistan – NRG Stadium, Houston (1 p.m. ET)

Group K: Colombia vs. FIFA playoff winner 1 – Guadalajara (10 p.m. ET)

June 24

Group C: Scotland vs. Brazil – Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (6 p.m. ET)

Group C: Morocco vs. Haiti – Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (6 p.m. ET)

Group B: Canada vs. Switzerland – BC Place, Vancouver (3 p.m. ET)

Group B: UEFA playoff A winner vs. Qatar – Lumen Field, Seattle (3 p.m. ET)

Group A: Mexico vs. UEFA playoff D winner – Estadio Azteca, Mexico City (9 p.m. ET)

Group A: South Korea vs. South Africa – Estadio BBVA, Monterrey (9 p.m. ET)

June 25

Group E: Ecuador vs. Germany – MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey (4 p.m. ET)

Group E: Curacao vs. Ivory Coast – Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (4 p.m. ET)

Group F: Tunisia vs. Netherlands – Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City (7 p.m. ET)

Group F: Japan vs. UEFA playoff B winner – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (7 p.m. ET)

Group D: USA vs. UEFA playoff C winner – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (10 p.m. ET)

Group D: Paraguay vs. Australia – Levi’s Stadium, Santa Clara, California (10 p.m. ET)

June 26

Group I: Norway vs. France – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (3 p.m. ET)

Group I: Senegal vs. FIFA playoff 2 winner – BMO Stadium, Toronto (3 p.m. ET)

Group G: New Zealand vs. Belgium – BC Place, Vancouver (11 p.m. ET)

Group G: Egypt vs. Iran – Lumen Field, Seattle (11 p.m. ET)

Group H: Uruguay vs. Spain – Estadio Akron, Guadalajara (8 p.m. ET)

Group H: Cape Verde vs. Saudi Arabia – NRG Stadium, Houston (8 p.m. ET)

June 27

Group L: Panama vs. England – MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey(5 p.m. ET)

Group L: Croatia vs. Ghana – Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (5 p.m. ET)

Group J: Jordan vs. Argentina – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (10 p.m. ET)

Group J: Algeria vs. Austria – Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City (10 p.m. ET)

Group K: Colombia vs. Portugal – Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (7:30 p.m. ET)

Group K: FIFA playoff 1 winner vs. Uzbekistan – Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (7:30 p.m. ET)

## Knockout Round

### Round of 32

June 28: TBD vs. TBD – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (12 p.m. ET)

June 29: TBD vs. TBD – NRG Stadium, Houston (12 p.m. ET)

June 29: TBD vs. TBD – Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (4:30 p.m. ET)

June 30: TBD vs. TBD – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (12 p.m. ET)

June 30: TBD vs. TBD – Estadio Azteca, Mexico City (7 p.m. ET)

July 1: TBD vs. TBD – Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (12 p.m. ET)

July 1: TBD vs. TBD – Lumen Field, Seattle (1 p.m. ET)

July 1: TBD vs. TBD – Levi’s Stadium, Santa Clara, California (5 p.m. ET)

July 2: TBD vs. TBD – SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (12 p.m. ET)

July 2: TBD vs. TBD – BMO Stadium, Toronto (7 p.m. ET)

July 2: TBD vs. TBD – BC Place, Vancouver (8 p.m. ET)

July 3: TBD vs. TBD – AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (1 p.m. ET)

July 3: TBD vs. TBD – Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (6 p.m. ET)

July 3: TBD vs. TBD – Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City (8:30 p.m. ET)

### Round of 16

July 4: NRG Stadium, Houston (12 p.m. ET)

July 4: Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia (5 p.m. ET)

July 5: Estadio Azteca, Mexico City (4 p.m. ET)

July 6: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (2 p.m. ET)

July 6: Lumen Field, Seattle (5 p.m. ET)

July 7: Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (12 p.m. ET)

July 7: BC Place, Vancouver (1 p.m. ET)

### Quarterfinals

July 9: Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts (4 p.m. ET)

July 10: SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles (12 p.m. ET)

July 11: Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (5 p.m. ET)

July 11: Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City (8 p.m. ET)

### Semifinals

July 14: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas (2 p.m. ET)

July 15: Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta (3 p.m. ET)

### Third-place match

July 18: Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida (5 p.m. ET)

### World Cup final

July 19: MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey (3 p.m. ET)