

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY *folder*  
NEWS BUREAU - GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 27834 - TELEPHONE 757-6481

William A. Shires, Director

EAST CAROLINA'S  
NICKNAME 'PIRATES'  
HAS COLORFUL HISTORY

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By GEORGE A. THREEWITTS  
ECU News Bureau Staff Writer

~~GREENVILLE~~ The pirate, a symbol of East Carolina University and its athletic teams, was adopted from the legend and lore of coastal North Carolina and was a natural choice for a nickname when intercollegiate athletics began at the school *in the 1930s.* ~~more than 42 years ago.~~

Pirates, fierce and colorful, were prominent in North Carolina's colonial period. The state's Outer Banks which jut far out into the Atlantic were ideal hideouts for these legendary gangsters of the high seas. Many had homes and families in the small villages along the ~~Carolina~~ coast.

Edward Teach, best known as "Blackbeard" was a resident of Eastern North Carolina. He had a house at Ocracoke on the Outer Banks and an inland home at Bath on the Pamlico River.

East Carolina University's interest in pirates and sea lore began in 1934. That year, the Tecoan, the yearbook for what was then East Carolina Teachers College, carried pirates as its theme. The pages were filled with paintings and sketches of patched eye figures, tall ships and buried treasure. The book referred to the tales of the infamous "Teachy the Pirate" often told by natives in the nearby historic town of Bath.

The men's varsity team, at the time, was known as "The Teachers," a lackluster band of athletes who had won only two football games in three seasons of existence. But the student body interest in pirates quickly resulted in changing the name of the team to capture the romantic appeal of the early sea adventurers. The change brought so much enthusiasm that in the following year, 1935, the Pirate football team had a much better season, winning three of its six games.

The 1932 team, the first men's team in the history of what had been mostly a teacher training school for women, was called the "Co-ed" team. But the Co-eds had an unspectacular first year losing all five of their games by an average score of 37.4 points per game.

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Prior to the introduction of athletics for men, the ECTC Athletic Association, comprising women athletes in basketball, tennis, baseball and archery were content with the more classical nicknames. A 1930-31 Handbook for ECTC listed the two teams that made up the Athletic Association as the Olympians and the Athenians. Their colors were purple and gold (the same as today's colors) and the mascot was a wildcat.

For a number of years a Great Dane was the official mascot for the Pirates. The dog was purchased in 1959 by the student government association <sup>which</sup> ~~who~~ built him an A-frame house and pen behind Memorial Gym and named him Buc (short for Buccaneer). Mrs. Agnes W. Barrett, an observer and recorder of ECU history since 1930, and the secretary-administrative assistant to six presidents, described Buc as handsome and lovable. But she said he let the Pirate team down as a mascot.

"He liked milk and disliked the smell of beer; hated the band and was terrified of crowds. To see him being led, almost dragged, around the football field did little to whoop up enthusiasm in the stands," she said.

The latest pirate mascot, 1972-74, was an albino dog resembling "Pete" in the Little Rascals films. The animal had a more propitious

nature and was named Wild Dog in honor of the Pirate defensive unit called "The Wild Dog." This name was originated in 1972 by Dick Jones, local area sports announcer who referred to the players as "a pack of wild dogs" as he broadcast the play-by-play early in the season.

Wild Dog appeared to take great pride in his role as mascot and enjoyed parading around the playing field with his name painted on his sides and a black circle drawn around his left eye. In 1974, the pirate fans attending the N. C. State <sup>- East Carolina</sup> / ECU game in Raleigh displayed uproarious approval as Wild Dog took an immediate dislike to State's wolf mascot and made every effort to attack the more docile wolf throughout most of the pregame activities.

Other uses of the pirate theme began in the 1940's with a literary magazine named "Pieces of Eight." The name, however, was later changed to "Rebel."

The college yearbook became the "Buccaneer" in the 1950's and the pirate symbol, the face of a bearded, patched-eye character with a crossed bone emblem on his hat was added to the school seal in the mid 1960's.

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