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POLICE BLOTTER

4/28: Traffic Accident/Property Damage

Officers responded to Student Union Loading Dock in reference to an Accident/
Property Damage Report.

4/30: Accident/Property Damage

Officers responded to Auxiliary Services Blvd. in reference to an Accident?/Property
Damage Report.

5/1: Larceny

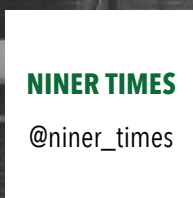
Officers responded to Hunt Hall in reference to a larceny of a gaming console.

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2020 - 2021 IN REVIEW



Top news stories of the 2020-2021 academic year

NEWS

by Megan Bird
News Editor

2020-21 in ten news stories

The top news stories of the 2020-21 academic year

The school year is coming to a close as students graduate, begin internships and move back home for those fleeting three months. Parents will no doubt pester you about what exactly has been going on in Charlotte over the past school year, and you will undoubtedly draw a blank. We've got you covered. Here's looking back on the good times, the bad times, and the highlights of the past year:

Gaber begins first year as UNC Charlotte Chancellor

On July 20, Dr. Sharon L. Gaber began her term as UNC Charlotte's fifth chancellor. She is the second woman to lead the institution (after founder Bonnie Cone) and the first woman to serve as chancellor.

Gaber came to UNC Charlotte at an unprecedented time in higher education as universities deliberated how to operate during the coronavirus pandemic. She was also charged with continuing remembrance and security efforts after the shooting on April 30, 2019, overseeing UNC Charlotte's continuous enrollment and campus growth. During her first year, she appointed an interim diversity and inclusion leader and began a national search for a chief diversity officer.

Some in-person instruction resumes

On Aug. 23, Chancellor Gaber

announced that UNC Charlotte would begin the semester online with plans to reinstate in-person instruction on Oct. 1. Move-in to residence halls was delayed until Sept. 26 except for international students, RAs and other students with extenuating circumstances.

The announcement came after 23 members of UNC Charlotte's public health faculty sent a letter to Chancellor Gaber urging her to begin the semester online. At the time, the University reported only four cases of COVID-19 on its main campus. No students in the UNC System were required to test negative for COVID-19 before returning to campus, and universities like UNC Chapel Hill and N.C. State began reporting clusters of cases days after their semesters began.

A Niner Times survey found that nearly 70% of the 280 respondents preferred an entirely remote semester while about 30% wanted to return to in-person courses.

As tens of thousands of students returned to UNC campuses, faculty and staff sued the UNC System over unsafe working conditions. Lead plaintiffs included members of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union (UE Local 150) and the North Carolina American Association of University Professors. A few days before remote classes began at UNC Charlotte, campus workers and North Carolina Public Service Workers Union members gathered outside of Cato Hall to deliver a list of demands to Chancellor Gaber. Among them were daily N95 masks and symptom screening, no 3 a.m. shifts and at least 25% additional hazard pay.

Students voted early at Belk Gym

North Carolina voter participation was at 71.2% in the November 2020 election, breaking a 40-year record set in 2008. Young voters especially turned out at record-setting rates. Many people voted early due to COVID-19, and UNC Charlotte hosted an early voting site at Belk Gym.

North Carolina was one of the last states to certify its election results. The battleground state supported Donald Trump, although Joe Biden ultimately secured the presidency. Senator Thom Tillis, R, was selected for a second term, giving Republicans 49 senators. N.C. sent five Democrats and eight Republicans to the U.S. House of Representatives, including Alma Adams, D, from Mecklenburg County's district. Nationally, Democrats maintained a majority in the U.S. House.

UNC Charlotte became the only UNC institution to have a spring break

In keeping with the abnormalities of the past year, UNC Charlotte's "spring" break occurred only three weeks into the spring 2021 semester. Chancellor Sharon L. Gaber announced on Jan. 11 that the break would be moved from late March to Feb. 8-12, making UNC Charlotte the only university in the UNC System observing a spring break. The decision was made in deference to advice from the Student Government Association (SGA) and Mecklenburg County health officials. UNC Charlotte also scrapped its earlier plans to move classes online after the late March break. Instead, the semester began remotely and

returned to some in-person instruction on Feb. 22.

Beginning of random mitigation testing

In late February, UNC Charlotte began mitigation testing of about 8,000 students and staff who returned to campus in some capacity. Each Wednesday, an email was sent out to a subset of that group indicating they had been selected for a COVID-19 test. Exceptions were granted for participants who couldn't participate in random mitigation testing due to religious or medical purposes.

The University also expanded wastewater testing to include frequented areas on campus and continued testing the residence halls.

Lawsuit alleges that Department of History professor sexually assaulted or harassed four female students

In March, a female UNC Charlotte student sued the University after religion historian Robert McEachnie allegedly initiated sexual intercourse with her during a summer study abroad trip to Jerusalem. The lawsuit also mentioned a second student who filed a complaint in July 2017 claiming that McEachnie had inappropriately touched and propositioned her on the same trip.

The lawsuit claims that one or more of McEachnie's superiors were aware in 2017 of his possible sexual misbehavior with multiple students on the trip that summer but did not act. Both students reported the incidents—one in 2017 and the other

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Photo by Niyathi Sultante via NinerTimes Flickr

in 2019. McEachnie was demoted from senior lecturer to lecturer after the second report and banned from taking students on university-sponsored study abroad trips, among other punishments.

Recently, the Charlotte Observer has reported that the lawsuit has since been amended to include two more female students allegedly harassed by McEachnie on the 2018 and 2019 trips.

Long-awaited Marriott hotel and conference center welcomes first guests

After nearly 30 years of planning and construction, UNC Charlotte's Marriott Hotel hosted its grand opening on March 31. In 2018, UNC Charlotte Chancellor Emeritus Phil Dubois persuaded the Charlotte City Council to invest \$8 million of tourism taxes towards building the \$87 million facility. Construction began around January 2019 and was planned to be finished by September 2020, but was delayed several months due to issues associated with COVID-19.

The 226-room Marriott is twice the size of conference facilities at similar-sized hotels, boasting a 24,000-square-foot conference center and a 132-space parking deck. The UNC Charlotte Foundation funded \$76 million into the project, covering the

majority of the costs.

New student body president and vice president begin tenure

On April 8, Richard "Dick" Beekman and Gabi Hitchcock were confirmed as the student body president and vice president for the 2021-2022 academic school year. Beekman previously served as president pro tempore of the Student Senate, and Hitchcock served as committee chair for the Internal Affairs Committee. Out of the 1,493 votes cast, Beekman-Hitchcock received 977, while their rival campaign, Williams-Perez, received 539.

At their first official SGA meeting on April 15, Beekman and Hitchcock already approved two acts, the Special Election Authorization Act I and the Safety Appreciation Act.

Second anniversary of April 30

Classes were canceled on April 30, 2021, as the University held virtual and in-person activities to honor the two-year anniversary of the campus shooting that took the lives of two students and injured four others.

The Day of Remembrance schedule included activities to promote healing

through mental health, physical activity, community discussion and reflection. The events began at 9 a.m. and lasted until 6 p.m. There was a Virtual Remembrance Program in the Jerry Richardson Stadium that evening with remarks from administrators, student leaders and student performers.

UNC Charlotte administers almost 3,000 vaccines

Over the course of the spring 2021 semester, UNC Charlotte hosted three vaccination clinics. Two provided the Johnson and Johnson vaccine—one on March 31 and another on April 12. The third clinic was held on April 20 and offered the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine will be administered in an on-campus clinic on May 11.

According to Director of Communications for the Division of Business Affairs Christy Jackson, the University has administered almost 3,000 vaccines to date. As of April 29, roughly 5,000 students have completed the University's survey, indicating they have been inoculated against the virus.



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GABER'S FIRST YEAR

Campus life under the Gaber Administration

by Hiral Patel and Milo Cain
Opinion Editor and Asst. Opinion Editor

As the pandemic rapidly started to change our ways of life at the start of 2020, UNC Charlotte had made some changes too. Dubois's resignation was known to the Niner community but what drew the attention of many Niners was the inauguration of our current Chancellor, Dr. Sharon L. Gaber. She became UNC Charlotte's fifth chancellor and made this transition in such an intractable time. As year one under the Gaber administration is about to come to an end, let's analyze the main implemented keynote policies.

We have reached the second anniversary of the events of April 30. This is not a moment of finality; it is merely another day of reliving trauma manifested at the end of what has already been a tough year. Many of us are confronted with trauma every day.

Our new Chancellor Sharon L Gaber did not live through these events, but she has inherited them. The students, faculty and staff that lived through that day are still here, still coping. Though she has made an earnest effort to memorialize the victims and comfort the Niner nation, what else can the Chancellor do? So many of us carry trauma from the events of April 30 or still feel intense isolation.

There is also trauma carried from other types of violence, such as harassment and feeling targeted. While the Gaber administration has done a great job addressing this through Niner Notice, such as addressing the trial of Derek Chauvin, and CAPS dedicating itself to specific counseling to the many different identities that make up UNC Charlotte. These services are specifically invaluable to our BIPOC and LGBTQ students by connecting them with groups and communities on campus and around Charlotte. These same students are now struggling with the isolation

that has come with the pandemic, facing difficult economic or social challenges.

The changes made to CAPS over the last year have been mixed and not far enough reaching. While the expansion of group sessions has been valuable in connecting people who share similar mental health issues, these services do not make up for the fact that the school still does not offer enough individualized counseling services. Just this year, CAPS cut the annual cap on individual sessions to 6 from 12.

This lack of mental health prerogative carried over into the decision of scheduling mental health days. These glorified vacation days ultimately serve little purpose if they can not connect with individual students' mental health crises. This semester was a grind plagued by burnout. While the pass/fail and honors measures that were put in place last year effectively bolster grades of students struggling to cope with the pandemic's intense isolation, we are not done with this pandemic yet, and the administration must stay vigilant.

Like many other universities, the Gaber administration has enforced several regulations regarding the community's health to protect us from contracting COVID-19. Keeping track of those on campus through daily Niner Health Checks, and informing the Niner community consistently through Niner Notice updates about clusters and general regulations, are a given. However, it is fair to say that the administration handled student-athletes and on-campus residences' health this year was outstanding.

To avoid the University from opting out of sports, athletes were required to undergo weekly COVID-testing. In preparation for tests coming out positive, an effective quarantine protocol was set

in place. Though some outbreaks have occurred among athletes, spreading among on-campus students has occurred too. It's costly and time-consuming to weekly test on-campus residents, so the University implemented wastewater testing. UNC Charlotte was one of the first schools in North Carolina to start wastewater testing. In this process, researchers would collect wastewater samples from residence halls and use them to detect any traces of the SARS virus. If the SARS virus was found, the residence hall would undergo COVID-19 testing and is sent to quarantine. This set precedent for other universities in updating their COVID-19 efforts.

In terms of the entire student body, the way the Gaber administration handled student schedules was outstanding. Coming back from vacations and allowing for the first three weeks of classes to be online while the coursework was light was helpful to students before there was a transition to in-person classes. This grace period allowed students to get tested, quarantine if necessary and prepare to move on to campus. Other schools had tried to redo what they did last semester, where they placed in-person classes at the start of the semester and then had to shut down their campus halfway through. Though spring break could have been a little later in the spring semester, we were lucky even to have one. Other schools had no spring break but invested in mental health days. UNC Chapel Hill reserved five wellness days for their students this semester: Feb. 15-16, March 11-12 and April 5. Some schools did not even receive any break. Unquestionably, there was a link between the pandemic and serving students a break. Most schools tried to prevent their students from spending a spring break just like last



OPINION

Photo Courtesy of UNC Charlotte



Chancellor Sharon Gaber

year's that caused a dramatic increase in the number of COVID-19 cases nationwide and would cause the University to shut down this year close to finals time.

Saying that the first year of the Gaber Administration has been a walk in the park is a gross understatement. It has been a trial of titans. We saw an unprecedented global health crisis, the worst economy since the great depression and a worldwide protest movement. These events prove the extraordinary times we live through. For Chancellor Gaber to take on this position at such a dire time, she has done an amazing job doing her best to connect with the student body and make decisions that may not have been popular but in the best interest of both the students and the University.

A year in review:

COVID-19'S IMPACT ON THE POPP MARTIN MOVIE THEATRE



by Amir Daniels
Staff Writer

Paul Berger and Josh Brown speak on the state of
UNC Charlotte's movie theater one year later.

Graphic courtesy
of Canva

It is your first day on the job. You are excited and nervous at the same time; you have waited forever for this day to arrive and want to make a good first impression on your boss and co-workers. As the day goes by, you make your fair share of mistakes, but your co-workers give you a helping hand. You are looking forward to another day on the job. But a second day on the job will have to wait as the entire country is forced into lockdown to protect everyone from a virus.

Paul Berger knows what it is like to start a new job and then have to adjust during a pandemic. Paul had just completed his first day as the operations coordinator at the Popp Martin Student Union movie theater when the COVID-19 pandemic forced UNC Charlotte to go into lockdown. When Paul got the news, he was shocked.

"When I came in, I was told I would be overseeing the movie theater," said Paul. "So my first day was normal operations, and the next day was when the pandemic happened. We went into social distancing and all that the second day I started working. So I knew nothing was going on movie-wise. It was me trying to learn the movie theater afterward."

Things did not get easier when Paul returned to the movie theater in the fall; he had to adjust to the COVID-19 guidelines, including disinfecting the theater and only allowing 10 people at a time during a showing. But the most challenging part was separating customers six feet apart.

"It was definitely an interesting task going about that because six feet might be halfway through a chair," said Paul. "So we have to decide if that chair is usable. It's probably not because half of it is within the six feet range. That was the hardest part, figuring out the operations of how our audience was going to be able to be in the theater to watch while also maintaining a safe distance."

Paul was not the only employee at the Popp Martin movie theater whose job was impacted due to the pandemic. His co-worker Josh Brown—who had been working as the Associate Director at the theater since 2019—was also shocked when the movie theater was closed due to the lockdown.

"Prior to the pandemic, we had our normal movie schedule," said Josh. "Thursday through Sunday, where we had two showings a day; one early evening and

one late in the day. When the pandemic occurred, we ceased movie operations."

In a normal semester, the Popp Martin movie theater runs a mix of old movies that were recently released but did not perform at the box office and new movies that were recently released and did great in the box office; through Swank Motion Pictures. When they are not showing movies, the theater hosts the international film festival and press conferences. When the campus went into lockdown in March, the 2020 international film festival and any press conferences scheduled for the spring were canceled. However, there was an option for the students to stream movies off-campus, but Josh and Paul decided not to go forward with the idea to save money.

"We were going to have to pay per student that was on campus, and we couldn't get charged based on what they were viewing," said Josh. It was going to be a per-month fee, not just a per-movie fee between 10 and 20 dollars per month for us to hold that streaming service."

When the theater reopened in the fall, Josh also had to comply with the COVID-19 guidelines. The biggest problem he faced was whether the theater

would have enough people on staff; the labor poll that originally had 15 to 20 people was reduced to six to eight.

"It was a bit of a challenge at the beginning until we found out how many students we were going to have," said Josh.

To save money, the movie theater will be screening old titles for the remainder of the spring semester. Students can attend the movie for free with their student ID, while employees, guests, and non-UNC Charlotte students must pay two dollars to enter the theater. To comply with the COVID-19 guidelines, the maximum capacity for the theater is 50%.



Paul Berger, the Operations Coordinator at the
Popp Martin Movie Theater



FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER

A superhero show with a subtle and relevant context

by Gabe Lapalombella
Staff Writer

Image courtesy of
Marvel Studios

For a franchise as massive as the Marvel Cinematic Universe, it's constantly evolving in the stories it tells. "The Falcon and The Winter Soldier" expands upon the Marvel mythos, but it also creates a story dealing with issues similar to those in the world today. Our story follows Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie) and Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan), who are thrown into a world of espionage. On the hunt to track down a newly formed terrorist group known as The Flag Smashers, this sets them on a course that lets them cross paths with new and familiar faces. What follows is an adventure of violence, politics and what it means to leave a legacy.

Having evolved after a 22 film conclusion in "Avengers: Endgame," the types of stories Marvel Studios can tell have expanded. We recently had "WandaVision," which was an incredibly scathing indictment of the grieving process. Now, we have the superhero spin on international and racial politics combined with terrorism. If that

sounds convoluted, please don't worry, you get plenty of Marvel goodness to go around. The top of that pyramid starts with both Stan and Mackie's brilliant chemistry. This has always been a comedic franchise, but their comradery is an absolute blast. In a brisk six episodes, we get the subtleties and outright homages to classic buddy cop films.

Like more recent Marvel films, "The Falcon and The Winter Soldier" dig into much deeper social and political areas. This includes the usage of supporting characters like Isaiah Bradley. Exploring the character that became Black Captain America allows the show to explore some interesting ground, as Sam is coming into the ethics of becoming the Captain, especially with being a black man in America. Parallel to this, we see Stan as Bucky Barnes trying to make amends from his actions as the Winter Soldier. That combination of character development works just as well as the season's

cinematic-in-scope action set pieces.

It's in these moments, which usually involve our villains that the show really gets to shine. This twosome goes up against the Flag-Smashers, their leader Karli Morgenthau (Erin Kellyman), the new Captain America John Walker (Wyatt Russell), and familiar faces Baron Zemo (Daniel Bruhl) and Peggy Carter (Emily VanCamp). If you haven't been watching, half the fun is watching what becomes of certain characters. What I will say of certain characters like Walker is that this is not your typical Captain America. Russell subtly rides the line of hero and anti-hero, which adds quite a bit of unpredictability to his performance. On the other hand, you have a character like Morgenthau, a villain, bringing up an argument that makes sense. Regarding VanCamp, it's quite easy to get excited about where she will go next in the universe.

The real issue with this first season comes in how things become wrapped up in

episode six. Playing like a six-hour movie, the show takes its characters through several interesting avenues while setting up others for the future. With all of that setup, episode six doesn't provide the closure many may be expecting. Like most Marvel features, many will consider it to simply be a tease to the next property. We get closure to our leads but don't quite get the closure of the more significant questions the show brings forward. It's hard to wonder if a seventh episode wouldn't have tied things together, but the ending feels abrupt. For such a fun and jam-packed journey, something like this was disappointing to see. What isn't disappointing is how much fun that I had up until that empty finish.

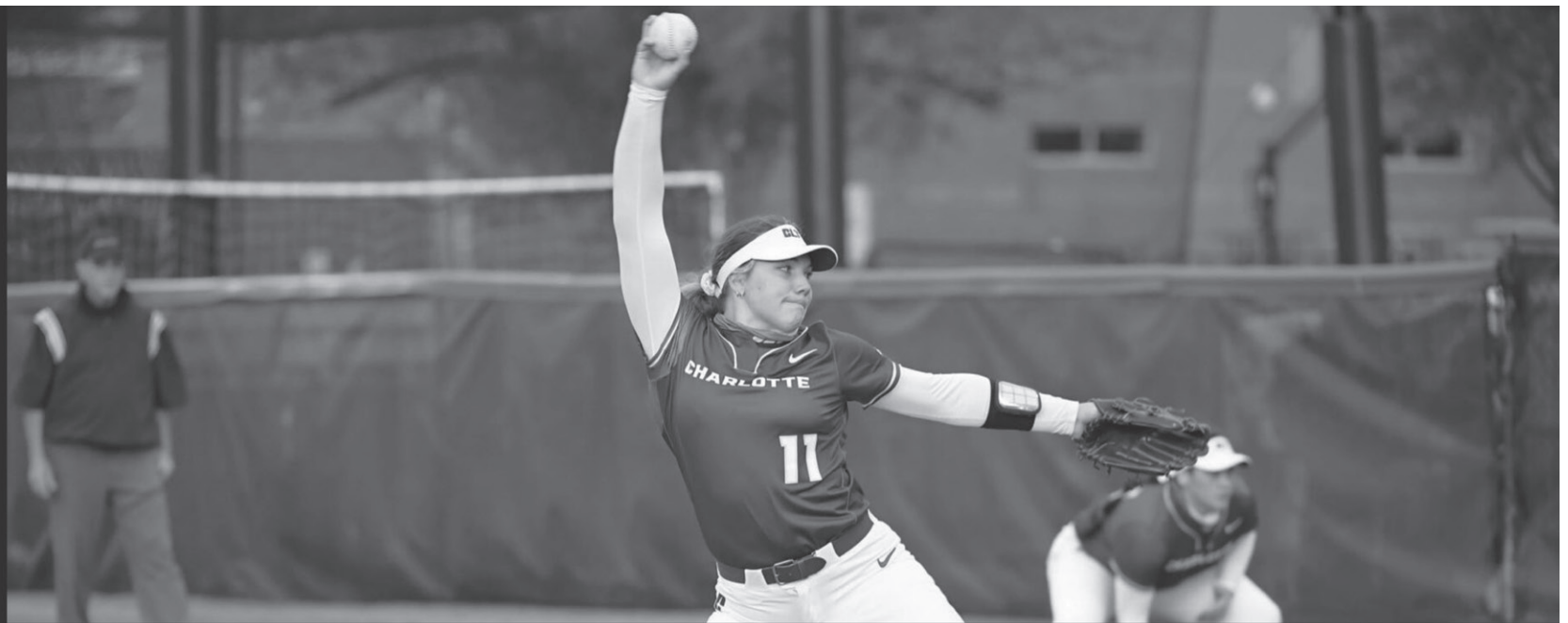
7.5/10



SPORTS

by Joey Ellsworth
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy
of Charlotte athletics



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

SOPHOMORE PITCHER MADELYN WRIGHT GETS IT DONE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PLATE

The 49ers softball team leads the Conference USA East division, sitting at 11-5 in conference games. If there's one thing this team has, it's talent.

One of these talents is Sophomore Pitcher Madelyn Wright. While there are many pitchers that don't bat, you rarely find a pitcher who is as much of a dual-threat as Wright. Whether she is stepping up to the mound or the plate, she poses a threat to opposing teams.

Wright comes from Fort Worth, Texas. It may be a 16-hour drive from Fort Worth to Charlotte, but it isn't much of a difference in sports either.

"All the sports in Texas are huge and overdone and coming here and even seeing the first football game, our stands in high school are the same size as our stands here. It's been fun, I'm used to the big sports atmosphere," said Wright.

Even back in high school, she has been able to handle the big atmosphere. At V.R. Eaton High School, Wright earned many school records with 698 strikeouts, 85 wins, and a .475 batting average. At Eaton, she earned Pitcher of the Year in 2019 and

first-team All-State and Academic All-State.

In her freshman year at Charlotte, Wright started in 25 of her 27 appearances, going 3-4 and holding a 3.92 ERA. She even saw time at first base because the team had six pitchers and short on other positions.

Her batting stats translated well from high school to college. She led all freshmen in batting average (.394), hits (28), doubles (7), triples (1), home runs (4) and RBIs (24). Hitting has always been a huge part of Wright's game and proved to be one of the better hitters during last year's shortened season.

"I love it so much. Just being able to have that on top of pitching has been really fun. I don't think I can just be a PO because of how much I love hitting," said Wright.

While she didn't see much pitching in her freshman year, she has played a much larger role on the mound her sophomore season. She dropped her ERA from 3.92 to 3.02, increased her win percentage by 29%, and her batting average allowed dropped from .291 to .261.

Less than a month ago, Wright won the C-USA Pitcher of the Week award after

pitching a total of 13.1 innings, allowing 13 hits while only giving up one earned run and striking out nine batters. She collected three wins over four games while holding an impressive 0.68 ERA. At bat, Wright hit for .400 with two RBIs, a double and a home run. She felt honored and humbled to be a recipient of the award.

"Growing up, you see all those awards and think I can't wait to get to college and play college softball. Maybe I'll win some of those awards, and maybe I'll be an All-American. Being able to see me on the cover of the Conference USA page was just a really cool feeling," said Wright.

When Wright steps on the field, she plays with a confidence that is shown not only her words but also her performance.

"Coming back this year after quarantine and everything, my confidence was at a whole new level, and knowing that the coaches know what I can do now, and knowing that I proved myself," said Wright.

It hasn't been an easy road for Wright. The team had their season halted for half of March due to covid tracing within the program. As an athlete in the world

today, she had to make a lot of sacrifices, especially in her social life. Although it has taken a toll on her mentally, it has yet to slow her production on the field. Wright continues to improve and continues to pose a threat to teams every time she steps onto the diamond.

The Niners are less than two weeks away from the C-USA Championship, and Wright is ready to go. As she has all year, Wright will play a big role in the team's success with only one more C-USA series against Marshall this weekend at home.



THE YEAR'S BEST MOMENTS

TOP 10 CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS MOMENTS FROM THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

by Bradley Cole
Sports Editor

Photos by
Chris Crews and Charlotte Athletics

Last summer, there were legitimate concerns when it came to college sports occurring during the 2020-21 school year. With the ongoing pandemic and the world-changing daily, rumors and speculation became normal.

Despite the doubts, athletics went on for the Charlotte 49ers, and teams have produced memorable moments all year long.

As the school year nears its end, the Niner Times Sports staff looks back on the first pandemic sports year with the top-ten moments and voted on these top moments.

#10-Coach Kevin Langan wins 100th game

Charlotte men's soccer coach Kevin Langan has become a household name and has helped lead the 49ers men's soccer team to success since his arrival in 2012. The 49ers have only missed the NCAA tournament once, and they have added another trip to the big dance in 2021. Langan won his 100th game as head coach when his team beat UAB by 3-0 on March 13. All of the coach's wins have come as the head coach of Charlotte.

#9- Charlotte baseball opening up Atrium Health Ballpark

Charlotte baseball had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity back on March 23. The team opened up the brand new Atrium Health Ballpark in Kannapolis, NC, the home of the minor league Kannapolis Cannonballers. The stadium had gone

unused to this point due to the pandemic. Charlotte and Appalachian State played the first-ever game in the stadium. The 49ers dominated en route to a 15-4 win.

#8- Ben DeLuca breaking the school record in tackles

Even though Covid-19 related issues plagued Charlotte football's season, Ben DeLuca brought a memorable moment for the program. As a redshirt senior, DeLuca picked up his 307th tackle against Western Kentucky on December 6. The tackle broke the previous record of 306 set by Jeff Gemmill the year before. DeLuca has gone to sign as an undrafted free agent with the Los Angeles Chargers.

#7- Charlotte volleyball's historic season

Charlotte volleyball had one of its best seasons in recent memory, making a run in the Conference USA Championships. In a shortened season that was supposed to happen in the fall, the 49ers went 12-4 in the regular season with a signature win against Clemson. With seven straight wins to end the year, the team went onto to beat UAB, 3-2, in the quarterfinals of the C-USA Championships.

#6- Charlotte baseball earning highest ranking in history

Charlotte baseball started off the season with a 6-0 record, and that impressive play was a sign for what was to come. The 49ers battled through losses here and there, along with a big win at home against #9 Tennessee, 9-0. The team finally

entered the national rankings on April 12 after starting Conference USA play with an 11-1 record. D1Baseball ranked Charlotte at #21. Since that ranking, the team made it to #15 in the D1Baseball poll on April 26, and then the team went on to beat North Carolina the next day, 4-1.

#5- Charlotte women's soccer makes surprise run

Charlotte's women's soccer team had a surprise run in the C-USA tournament after an up and down season. The 49ers started the season 1-3 and had trouble closing games. They went on a 3-3 run in the last six games and dropped their last game of the year to Western Kentucky. However, Charlotte beat North Texas (1-0) and Western Kentucky (2-0) to make the C-USA finals. They would go on to lose to Rice, 0-2.

#4- Charlotte men's soccer makes 15th NCAA Tournament

The Charlotte men's soccer team knows how to win. In a pandemic world, that didn't change. After a rough start where they started 0-2-1, they beat #7 Kentucky 2-1 in overtime. The 49ers won five straight games and didn't allow a goal. Despite not winning the C-USA Championship, #14 Charlotte earned an at-large bid for the NCAA Tournament.

#3- Rocio Safont breaking the record for all-time singles wins

Safont has impacted Charlotte women's tennis since she stepped foot

on campus four years ago. This year all of her hard work paid off as she broke the school record for singles wins with her 79th on March 20 against Charleston Southern. Safont beat the Buccaneers' Khyanna Singh 6-2, 6-3. The win also helped her team pick up the win.

#2- Charlotte Cross Country makes history at NCAA Tournament

For the first time in school history, Charlotte's men's cross country team made the NCAA Tournament. The team had their season in the fall and won the Conference USA Championship on October 31. In addition, the team won the Mountains to Sea Open at Appalachian State at their first meet. Despite having a fall season, the NCAA Championships were held in the spring. The 49ers earned a bid to the tournament that was held on March 15. They placed 28th out of 30th teams. Nick Scudder led the team with a 76th place finish.

#1- Octavia Jett-Wilson's Monster Week

Many players impacted Charlotte's women's basketball team in 2020-21, but Jett-Wilson had one of the most notable weeks in recent memory for a Charlotte player. She averaged 38.0 points and 11.0 rebounds per game on the week of Feb. 10-13. She surpassed 1,000 career points and earned a slew of awards, winning ESPN National Player of the Week, named to the NCAA Starting Five, earned C-USA Player of the Week, and other awards.

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I TRIED A TRAPEZE CLASS IN CHARLOTTE



LIFESTYLE

by Emily Kottak
Lifestyle Editor



In October, I attended a Caroline Calouche & Co performance, “Animalia”. The show included aerial cirque acts such as the lyra (hoop), silks, and trapeze. I found it fascinating. So much so that it made me want to experience it for myself. The only “acrobatic” experience I have is doing gymnastics from the ages of 4-5. It was a fun activity as a young kid, but I soon found myself more drawn to basketball and running instead. But after seeing “Animalia” and seeing how beautiful and fun the acts looked, I felt the urge to try it.

Six months later and I found myself in the Caroline Calouche & Co studio with two of my best friends standing in front of the trapeze bar. I’d gotten in touch with the company and had signed up for a beginner trapeze class. Our instructor, Sarah, had been doing aerial cirque acts for ten years and trapeze for nine and a half. She was more than talented in cirque.

The first thing Sarah led us through was stretching. We had to stretch out our arms and legs as trapeze requires a lot of strength and stability. After stretching, Sarah explained the different components of the trapeze bar, including the bar itself, the “elbows” (the sides of the bar) and the ropes. Then, it was time to go. First, we had to get up on the trapeze bar, which, frankly, was the most challenging part, in my opinion. I thought it would be pretty easy to get up there by swinging up my legs and hanging from the bar with them and then just pulling myself up with my arms. No, it was not simple. It took so much time and energy to get my legs up and to hang by my legs. And then I still had to pull the rest of my body up with my arms. By the time I finally got up on the bar, I felt exhausted but also accomplished.

I stayed up on the bar the whole time, so I didn’t have to try and get back on and go

through that struggle again. The trapeze bar is even more uncomfortable than it looks. First of all, the bar and ropes are very rough, and one of my palms was bleeding halfway through class. Second of all, the bar is very thin and extremely uncomfortable. When we were doing sitting poses, it was very painful to be sitting on the bar. I thought that would be resolved when we stood up on the bar, but that ended up being quite painful on the feet. Regardless of the discomfort, it felt pretty cool to be standing on the top of a trapeze bar. Sarah showed us how to do several sitting and standing poses.

Trust is a big part of trapeze. When told to let go with one arm and stick out your leg in the air, you have to trust your body that you will not fall and that you are strong enough to hold on. My friend did fall one time, but luckily there were cushioned mats below us to keep us safe. The other thing

about trapeze is that the bar has a mind of its own a lot of times. I found that my bar kept slowly spinning in circles which made it even more difficult to try and execute poses correctly, and it also made me pretty dizzy.

Ultimately, I successfully executed several sitting and standing poses, and while I did not look like a professional acrobat, I think I did pretty well for a beginner. Our bodies felt like jelly after, and we were sweating and exhausted and were extremely sore for several days, but we also felt a sense of fulfillment. I still think it’s pretty cool that I did a trapeze class with zero experience and that I gave it my all. Trying new things can be exciting and scary but can also boost confidence and remind you how wonderful you are.

Photos by Emily Kottak



The realities of being an essential worker

Working on the frontlines during a pandemic

by Lesly Santos
Staff Writer

An essential worker is defined as a person who works in operations or services needed for the community to function. During this pandemic, the label has carried a lot of weight and changed the perception of retail and service workers. The country began to appreciate the people who work to help the community, such as doctors, nurses, grocery workers, and people on the pandemic's front line.

COVID-19 impacted store and building policies, but it was not all that enforced. I work in a chain supermarket, and in the beginning, there were policies set for the protection of customers and employees. Often customers would disregard the guidelines because they felt entitled to their opinion of the pandemic. This created an unsafe and unsanitary environment for the people in the store. And even

though we had store policies in place, managers and employees alike turned a blind eye to avoid confrontation.

Social distancing was almost a joke to people because regardless of the number of signs and floor stickers, people always found ways to invade the personal space of others. People often felt it was necessary to get closer and lower their masks to communicate their questions. The issue is that it was unnecessary; all one has to do is speak up a little. There was no reason to compromise one's health safety. Stores made their attempts to instill safety guidelines and provide PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but customers did not care.

We had cleaning routines where people would go around the store to sanitize common areas such as the bathrooms, call buttons, refrigerator hands, registers,

etc. It gave the staff a sense of safety and comfort to know that the areas were being cleaned, but that shattered every time we witnessed someone sneeze into their hand and reach for the refrigerator handle. Or when we would see that someone grabbed an open red bull that was left in the kids' clothing area and start drinking out of it. Some things are common sense, like not drinking from a stranger's drink, but common sense was thrown out the window when COVID-19 hit.

Companies attempted to make the workplace safer with guidelines, PPE and information about COVID-19, but it seems futile when it becomes compromised by the general public. And if there were to be a COVID-19 case, we would only be alerted of the date the person was last in the store but not the department. I understand trying

to respect the individual's privacy, but at the same time, it would have been helpful to know if we came into close contact with the person. When working in a public place, you are bound to cross paths somehow, perhaps in the break room or at the time clock, and it can create a lot of stress.

Working publicly during the pandemic takes a toll on the body and mind. It can bring you to your breaking point because of how much is being asked of you. There are a lot of different scenarios that you have to tolerate when being an essential worker. The label alone does not suffice to comprehend the pressure and stress people get put through. You may be called an essential worker, but at the end of the day, you're an overworked, under-appreciated public worker who could get replaced in a heartbeat.



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