



Attention Students: Do you have a story or idea to share with High School Highlights? Email us at highschoolhighlights@upandcomingweekly.com

Cape Fear athletes flock to Ultimate Frisbee

by EARL VAUGHAN JR.



Cape Fear recently completed its first season in a Raleigh-based Ultimate Frisbee league.



Trace Cannady (left) and Caleb Krings (right)

When Cape Fear athletic director Matt McLean came to assistant football coach Joe Grates with the idea of starting a team in something called Ultimate Frisbee, Grates first thought it was a joke.

But when he had an interest meeting and 100 students showed up, he realized there might be something to it.

Cape Fear recently completed its first season in a Raleigh-based Ultimate Frisbee league, compiling a 9-4 record and finishing fifth place in the 16-team league.

Ultimate Frisbee is a hybrid sport that combines elements of football, basketball and soccer according to Grates. It's played on a field about half the size of a football field and involves advancing a Frisbee down the field and moving it over the goal line to score a single point.

Games usually take about 90 minutes to play, and the first team to 15 points is the winner.



The game combines football, basketball and soccer.

Moving the Frisbee up and down the field is the complicated part.

"Once you catch the disc, you can't run with it," Grates said. Just like in basketball, you can be called for traveling, but you are allowed to keep your pivot foot in place and turn while standing on it.

You advance the disc with short or long passes to teammates.

Another tricky thing is this is a no-contact sport. You can defend and impede the progress of opposing players, but not by bumping or jostling them around.

Throwing the disc may be the biggest challenge, Grates said. "There's two types of throws, backhand and forehand," he said. The backhand, or flick, is the tougher of the two. "It's a skill and has to be practiced," he said. "It's not as easy as it looks."

There are five players per team on the field at a time, no officials. "It's totally self-governed by the

kids," Grates said. "They have to resolve disputes on their own. That's kind of the spirit of the game."

Grates had about 18 players on the team as the season was winding down, and there was quite a mix as far as the types of players.

"We've got football players, soccer players, band guys, basketball players and swimmers," he said, "guys looking to get a workout and have a good time."

Grates added the competition offers skill development in a variety of areas. "It's great agility for football, soccer and basketball," he said. "It's the same kind of skill set with the cuts and movement."

He also said it provides great conditioning for big guys like Cape Fear football offensive tackle Caleb Krings. "He's deceptively fast, and he's slimmed down playing this, too," Grates said. "It's an amazing aerobic workout."

Krings said he thought the game was a little funny at first but that it's a great way to stay in shape and gives him a sport to play in the spring instead of going home after school.

"It's not just going out in the backyard and playing," he said. "We get out here to stay in shape."

Trace Cannady, who plays center for the Colt football team, said the game helps him with his footwork. "The competition is there but it's relaxed," he said. He said there's plenty of conditioning because of all the running.

Grates said he can attest to the last part. "It's helped me lose 20 pounds," he said.

EARL VAUGHAN JR., Sports Editor.
COMMENTS? EarlUCWSports@gmail.com, 910-364-6638.





Help for weak conference schedules

by EARL VAUGHAN JR.

The N.C. High School Athletic Association playoffs in a number of team sports began last week, and schools anxiously awaited the reveal of the playoff brackets that would be seeded using the process incorporating the statewide rankings calculated by MaxPreps.

Two teams with especially high expectations were the girls soccer squad from Terry Sanford and the softball team from Cape Fear. Both completed the regular season with perfect records.

But when the rankings came out, Terry Sanford was only seeded third among the soccer teams in the Eastern half of the state. Cape Fear fared better, but like Terry Sanford, was behind teams that suffered losses on their overall records and also took the third seed.

So why the lowered rankings for both? The answer lies in something called strength of schedule.

One of the critical factors incorporated into the ranking process is how good the teams you play against are. If you'll take a look at the MaxPreps statewide rankings, you'll see they've got a low opinion of the teams Terry Sanford and Cape Fear faced this season.

Of the top 20 soccer teams in North Carolina in the MaxPreps 3-A soccer rankings, Terry Sanford was the only one with a negative strength of schedule. Cape Fear and Hillsborough Cedar Ridge are the only top 20 3-A softball teams with negative strength of schedule ratings.

A big part of the problem for both Cape Fear and Terry Sanford is the teams they are forced to play in the Patriot Athletic Conference. Twice a year, both the Colt softball team and the Bulldog soccer team are forced to line up against multiple league opponents with really bad overall records.

In games where both teams often win by the mercy rule, they take a beating in the strength of schedule computations and it drags them down in the seeding for when it really counts, the state playoffs.

Is there a cure, since it appears statewide rankings and strength of schedule calculations aren't going to be disappearing anytime soon? Possibly, but it's a complicated one and could create another headache for some other schools.

There have been informal conversations among some county coaches and athletic directors in sports where teams play each other twice in the conference to make a radical change in the conference schedule. The change would be to just play one conference game with each team in the league and possibly even eliminate the conference tournament.

What does that accomplish? For the schools with serious designs on the state playoffs, it gives them up to six or seven more games they can schedule, allowing them to shop around the region and state and try to find nonconference matchups with competitive programs that wouldn't take the air out of their strength of schedule.

But then you've got the other side of the coin. What happens to those conference teams with sub-par programs that suddenly lose half their conference slate? How can you guarantee them enough games to fill out a schedule? Would they be limited to trying to find other struggling teams to play against?

These discussions have been completely informal so far, and no one is proposing anything concrete. But I think it's at least worth exploring, as long as both strong and weak programs can be assured of getting enough games to fill the schedule and charge admission. That's because paying the bills is crucial, and you've got to have a full slate of games to do that, even for a small crowd.

The other option, and this is the better one but would take a lot more work to accomplish, would be to upgrade the struggling teams in the various sports that are dragging down strength of schedule for the other ones.

This whole thing may be a knee-jerk reaction to the problem, but whatever is done, it's obvious coaches and athletic directors need to be thinking outside the box long term and trying to find an answer to this problem. The days of just putting one cookie-cutter schedule template together for all sports are over.

If seeding and strength of schedule are going to be a part of the playoff process annually, it has to be addressed in the schedule process sport by sport to give everyone a fair chance of the best ranking possible.

A big part of the problem for Cape Fear and Terry Sanford is they are forced to play in the Patriot Athletic Conference.

ROCKET FIZZ SCHOLAR ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



Eli O'Neal
Jack Britt • Basketball • Junior

O'Neal has a grade point average of 3.5. He enjoys basketball, math and riding the bicycle.



Summer Powell
Gray's Creek • Softball • Sophomore

Powell has a 3.83 grade point average. She has been chosen to play for the Region 4 team in this summer's Powerade State Games.

Rocket Fizz Soda Pop and Candy Shop congratulates these amazing scholar athletes of the week and invites them to the Rocket Fizz Store at 1916 Skibo Rd. to receive a **FREE** gift recognizing their achievement!
www.rocketfizz.com

**BRINGING YOU THE BEST
IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY
HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS**

MONDAY

Join Don Koonce & Trey Edge for the Baseball Game of the Week

May 18th

4th Round - Teams TBA

NCHS Athletic Assn

May 22nd - 26th

Regional Championships

Teams TBA

NCHSAA

6-8pm

**AM640
WFNC**
NEWS TALK RADIO

ALL on WCLN 105.7 FM Airtime 6:45 PM

April Athlete of the Month (Baseball): Andrew Jayne, Terry Sanford HS