

UNC responds to 3rd set of charges

BY JOEDY MCCREARY
AP SPORTS WRITER

RALEIGH — North Carolina remains steadfast in its belief that the NCAA is overreaching in its investigation of the school's long-running academic fraud case.

In a 102-page response to a third set of NCAA charges, North Carolina on Thursday once again challenged the NCAA's jurisdiction to pursue charges for issues the school states "are academic in nature" and "lie beyond the reach of the bylaws belatedly invoked" by the NCAA. The school's argument mirrors the position it took last August to a previous NCAA Notice of Allegations.

"The fundamental issue in our case is that the NCAA bylaws cover athletics matters, not how academics are managed," athletic director Bubba Cunningham said on a conference call following the release of UNC's response. "Our reply to each allegation is based on the NCAA's constitution and member-adopted bylaws. We expect the committee on infractions to consistently apply these bylaws as the case moves forward."

The NCAA has said in the past that UNC's argument is "without merit."

Thursday's response is the latest step in the seven-year investigation. UNC faces five top-level charges, including lack of institutional control, in the extensive probe centered on irregular courses in an academic department.

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UNC coach receives contract extension

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHAPEL HILL — North Carolina has extended coach Larry Fedora's contract through the 2022 season.

Team spokesman Kevin Best says the deal was approved Thursday by the school's board of trustees.

The new deal will pay Fedora \$1.95 million this season, including a base salary of \$400,000 and supplemental income totaling \$1.55 million. Those amounts increase to \$600,000 in base salary and \$2.4 million in supplemental income — for a total of \$3 million — in each of the final three years of the contract.

His incentive clauses range from \$50,000 for a bowl berth to \$200,000 for winning a national title.

Fedora is 40-25 in five seasons at North Carolina and led the Tar Heels to the 2015 Coastal Division championship.

'I had the lottery of friends'

Northern Vance baseball player's mother finds strength from team, community

BY LOGAN ULRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

The first time Austin Murphy hit a home run this season, his mom was in the hospital.

With two strikes down and no balls, the Orange County pitcher got greedy and threw a fastball straight down the middle. Austin hit it so hard it flew into the neighboring softball field at Northern Vance High School.

Meanwhile, his mother, Paula, was at Duke University Hospital, starting her first chemotherapy treatments for diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, an aggressive form of cancer that first started in her lymph nodes and then metastasized to her bones.

That might be one of the hardest things about having cancer for Paula Murphy. She hated missing her son's games, especially this season. Something clicked for Austin this year, and he hit the ball better than he ever had before. He finished with 33 hits at a .429 average and sent five balls over the fence. He was named the Big Eight Conference player of the year — the first Northern Vance player to do so in 16 years.

For a little while, Paula drove herself to Austin's games, until one day she had a seizure and totaled her car. After that, her twin sister and mother drove her to watch her son play, sometimes wearing a mask to protect her weakened immune system from infection. If she wasn't in the hospital hooked up to a bag, she was at her son's games. Out of 23, she only missed six.

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There's a lot of differences between mother and son. Her eyes are blue; his eyes are brown. She loves to talk; every word has to be dragged out of him. He sits silent in between Paula and her twin sister, Kristy, baseball cap pulled over his face, while the two of them chat away. They'd look a lot more like twins if the chemo had spared Paula's short, blonde hair, but their piercing blue eyes that light up



SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH

Northern Vance junior Austin Murphy wears a shirt honoring his mother, Paula, who's been battling cancer since early March. This season, Austin was named Big Eight Conference player of the year and the Vikings made the playoffs for the seventh straight season.

when they laugh give them away.

"We're not letting you talk, Austin," his mom laughs.

"That's fine," he says.

But both mother and son are strong. Austin is built thickly and compactly, listed at 6 foot and 225 pounds on MaxPreps. He loves to spend his time outdoors, hunting and fishing. He's been a calm and steadying presence since Paula was diagnosed March 7.

"It takes a lot to get me upset," he

said. "Small things that make some people upset don't bother me. It's got to be something really bad."

Paula worked four jobs as a single mother before her diagnosis. Two of them involved restocking shelves with beer and Dr. Pepper at local stores. She'd check the shelves, then bring up from inventory what was needed. It was a lot of lifting, and her back began to hurt.

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All-Star champ seeks to snap drought at CMS

BY STEVE REED
AP SPORTS WRITER

CONCORD — Kyle Busch proved last week he could win a Cup race at Charlotte Motor Speedway in the exhibition NASCAR All-Star race.

Now he's out to prove he can win a Cup points race and put an end a long drought.

"It felt good to get that out of the way, so now hopefully we can make it back-to-back," Busch said Thursday.

Busch has won eight Xfinity Series races and seven Truck Series races at Charlotte, but is 0 for 26 in Cup points races. If he can get to victory lane Sunday in NASCAR's longest race he would become the first driver to sweep the All-Star race and the Coca-Cola 600 since brother Kurt did it in 2010.

Even team owner Joe Gibbs wasn't aware of Busch's Cup race struggles at Charlotte, saying, "To tell you the truth, I thought he had won here."

He probably should have.

But it seems things have conspired against him in Cup races. Some of it Busch has brought on himself with poor decisions or costly driving errors, while some of it has been out of his control.

In 2013, for instance, he was going for a series-wide sweep at CMS and leading the Coca-Cola 600 more than a third of the way into the 400-lap race.

That's when a nylon rope supporting a Fox Sports overhead television camera fell from the grandstands and got tangled up in his No. 18 Toyota. NASCAR red-flagged the race and allowed teams an opportunity to fix their cars, but Busch could never recreate the speed he had before. His night ended in frustration when his engine blew up on Lap 253.

"I just heard a big thunk on the right-front side tire and the right-front tire blew out," Busch said at the time about the cable. "That's how hard it felt It did have an effect slowing my car down and

I could feel it like, 'Whoa, that's weird.' I don't know that anybody has ever seen that."

But Busch knows winning the Coca-Cola 600 won't be easy.

He called NASCAR's longest race, a 400-lap marathon on a 1½-mile course a "mental and physical grind." "You just get tired," Busch said. "I wouldn't say you fall out of the seat, but when you're done, you're done."

Busch was ninth-fastest in practice Thursday and said his crew has plenty of work to do.

He knows how important it is to run out front in Charlotte in the clean air. Last year, Martin Truex Jr. got out to the lead and nobody could catch him, leading 392 of 400 laps.

The difficulty in passing at Charlotte places an added emphasis on restarts and pit stops.

Busch feels like his team has been the leader in pit stop development over the last 15 years and he showed last week he's still a master

at restarts.

With three laps remaining in the All-Star race, Busch showed his driving savvy when he took the low side of the track to pass Brad Keselowski — who was running on old tires — from the second row to beat out four-time All-Star race winner Jimmie Johnson for the \$1 million prize.

Busch said he won despite not having the best car.

He said the race setup they've brought to Charlotte is even better.

Crew chief Adam Stevens said it's only a matter of time before Busch finds his way to victory lane at Charlotte in a Cup points race.

"No different than Kansas, some of these other places he's struggled at in the past," Stevens said. "Wouldn't say here has been a struggle, but it's just been a fluff, but it's off. Hopefully (the All-Star race win) is a little bit of momentum, a little bit of wind in our sails, something we can build on."

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Boy struck on head by broken bat at Yankees game

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A boy was struck on the head by Chris Carter's broken bat during the New York Yankees' game against the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday night.

With Didi Gregorius on second base and no outs in the seventh inning, Carter's bat shattered on a 3-1 fastball from Matt Strahm. The ball bounced on one hop to second baseman Whit Merrifield, and much of the bat hit the boy, who was sitting about seven rows back on the third-base side, behind the Royals dugout.

Fans around the boy waved frantically for assistance, and play stopped for two minutes as players looked to the seats.

Medical personnel carried out the boy, who appeared to have a leg that was in a brace. Yankees spokesman Jason Zillo said the fan was given first aid at the ballpark and was receiving medical attention elsewhere after the game. He said the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, known as HIPAA, prevented the team from giving more information.

Carter said he did not see the boy get hit.

"You never want to have something like that happen to a kid or anyone in general," he said. "I guess the good side of it is the square part of the bat didn't pierce him or anything like that. So I hope he's OK."

Carter will try to speak with the family.

"Once I figure out what happened to the kid, where they're at, hopefully I can get a hold of him," he said. "Hopefully, it's not too bad."

Major League Baseball in December 2015 recommended teams have protective netting or screens between the near ends of both dugouts.

New York City Councilman Rafael L. Espinal Jr. has introduced legislation for protective netting to be extended to the ends of both dugouts.

"The young boy hit by a shattered bat at last night's Yankee game is a prime example of why it is important that our teams extend their netting ASAP," Espinal said in a statement. "It becomes clearer and clearer that the seats immediately behind home plate are not the only seats that must be protected by netting."

position has been from the very beginning."

The school also stated that the NCAA was inconsistent by not alleging any violations for what UNC described as similar situations with classes at Auburn in 2006 and Michigan in 2008.

When similar issues of overreach were raised by UNC in August 2016, the NCAA responded that the argument was "without merit."

In a statement provided by NCAA spokeswoman Emily James, the committee on infractions declined to comment on the ongoing case except to say it will consider "the full record when determining the facts of the case — not by media reports or select documents included in filings released by one party."

The school also disagreed with some statistics in a 2014 investigation by former U.S. Justice Department official Kenneth Wainstein into irregularities in the formerly named African and Afro-American Studies (AFAM) department. His report estimated more than 3,100 students were affected between 1993 and 2011, with athletes across numerous sports accounting for roughly half the enrollments in the problem courses.

UNC argued that the Wainstein report counted as student-athletes some students who no longer were members of a sports team when they took the course, disagreeing with what it called a "once an athlete, always an athlete" approach.

The school's response did not include any self-imposed sanctions, and it also made no mention of Sankey.

UNC

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The NCAA enforcement staff has until July 17 to file a response. Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey, who heads the NCAA infractions panel handling the case, has said his panel will hear the case in August with "anticipated" dates of Aug. 16 and 17. The case could reach a resolution by the end of 2017.

The major development in the case before UNC's response came two weeks ago, when a woman at the center of the investigation — Deborah Crowder — was interviewed by investigators after previously declining to cooperate. Crowder, a retired office administrator who graded many of the papers in the problem classes, also filed an affidavit in March defending the quality of the courses.

North Carolina stated it will file a supplemental response to Thursday's documents to include specific references to Crowder's testimony once it receives the official transcript of her interview from the NCAA.

The school repeated its stance that the NCAA's constitution and bylaws apply to "basic athletics issues" and don't extend to matters of academic structure, content and process on campus. UNC blames those issues on "the result of inadequate academic oversight unrelated to" the athletic department and says it has implemented 70 reforms to prevent recurrences.

"In a global sense," Cunningham said, UNC's response "is consistent with what our

James: Chase about motivation

BY KYLE HIGHTOWER
AP SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — LeBron James says his chase of Michael Jordan's accomplishments is simply personal motivation. It's not about wanting to establish himself as the NBA's greatest player.

James spoke Thursday during the morning shootaround before the Cavaliers play the Boston Celtics in Game 5 of the Eastern Conference finals.

If the Cavaliers

advance, James would be making a seventh consecutive trip to the NBA Finals.

He said his goal is not about passing Jordan in titles, points or MVP awards. James is 28 points shy of overtaking Jordan as the postseason's leading scorer. With 40 more points, James could also become the first player in NBA history to score 6,000 points in the playoffs.

But the Cavaliers superstar says his pur-

suit is about leaving a legacy to motivate the next generation of players.

"It's just my personal goal to keep me motivated, that's all," James said. "You guys are gonna have the conversations about who's the greatest of all time and things of that nature, it doesn't matter to me."

He also said he believes that the greatness conversation is discussed more often in the NBA than in other sports.

"It's never talked about (in the) NFL, who's the greatest quarterback. It's just like (Dan) Marino, (John) Elway, (Peyton) Manning, (Tom) Brady — all great quarterbacks. It should be the same for us," James said. "We go out and just try to be as great as we can be every night."

"The comparison of always trying to compare people, either living or still playing or not playing — I think it's great for barbershops."

Warriors coach not ready to return

BY JANIE MCCAULEY
AP SPORTS WRITER

OAKLAND, Calif. — Steve Kerr is involved in just about everything but the actual game-day coaching for the Golden State Warriors — film session, coaches meetings, game-planning and practice.

He's just not yet ready from a health standpoint to be back on the bench with the start of the NBA Finals a week away.

General manager Bob Myers made the announcement Thursday, though he didn't rule out Kerr returning at some point if he somehow is healthy enough to do so — though that doesn't appear promising at this stage.

"If he feels better and we have to make those decisions, we will, but right now we're not putting any deadlines on should he feel better what will we do," Myers said. "It'll be based on what day it is, how exactly he feels, how long he's felt well. I should be saying this with more emotion because it's hard for me. I'm kind of in this basketball mode but he's a person and he's not feeling well and that's what makes it hard — more than how it affects our team is how he's feeling that makes it very difficult to have to sit here and say that the man that's hugely responsible for us being in the Finals for three years in a row, in a moment that he should be treasuring, can't do it."

"It's painful, and I know it's painful for him more than anybody."

Kerr was there as his team returned to practice following a two-day break after completing

a four-game sweep of the Spurs on Monday night to improve to 12-0 this postseason. Myers noted that "just having him in the building and around is very powerful."

The 51-year-old Kerr underwent a procedure May 5 to repair a spinal fluid leak stemming from complications after two back surgeries in 2015, after the Warriors won their first championship in 40 years during his first season as coach.

While people have asked Kerr whether he should step away, Myers knows that's not the immediate answer.

"This is his sanctuary. Even though he's suffering, being at home or being removed is actually harder if we can understand that, because this is his joy," the GM said. "Even though it's a muted joy right now, this is the best thing that he feels. This is his fulfillment."

Kerr returned to practice May 13 after more than three weeks off the court, and he hasn't coached the Warriors on the bench since Game 2 of the first round against Portland. He then traveled for the Western Conference finals to San Antonio and has been watching games from behind the scenes, speaking to the team beforehand and during halftime. Acting coach Mike Brown has been leading Golden State during Kerr's absence.

It's unclear how well the latest procedure worked for Kerr, who missed the initial 43 games last season dealing with debilitating symptoms such as headaches and nausea that have returned

throughout this season.

"Unfortunately, this has been a two-year odyssey," Myers said. "He's never tried to sugarcoat how he feels. Sadly, we've been dealing with this. So I can tell, and you guys are around, you see the ups and downs ... He's not going to put himself or the team at risk and say that he can do it if he doesn't feel like he can."

Brown said he will continue to lead the way with reigning NBA Coach of the Year Kerr's guidance until told otherwise. Myers doesn't ask Kerr every day how he is feeling, rather allowing the coach to reach out with any updates.

"This is unusual, right?" Myers said. "It's a lot of gray area even though Mike has won all these games. There's no right or wrong way to handle this, short of looking in his eyes: 'How you feeling? How do you feel about doing it?'"

Even Myers, a close friend of Kerr along with being a colleague, is struggling to appreciate the accomplishment by the Warriors given the coach's heart-wrenching ordeal.

"Somebody asked me, 'Is going to the Finals three times muted because of what's going on?' Of course it is," Myers said. "This should be great. This should be unbelievable. And we are excited, and we are proud, but our head coach can't coach. It's not an excuse, it's just a fact, and that sucks. But we deal with it, and everybody has been dealing with it and have met that challenge and have embraced it and will continue to do it."

FRIENDS

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of chemo is scheduled for July 6. Then they'll decide if she needs radiation.

In the meantime, she and Austin have been uprooted. The doctors found fractures in her pelvis, caused by the bone cancer and responsible for some of her pain, and have her limited to a wheelchair as much as possible. She can't stay at her house as much because her room and bathroom are upstairs, so she stays with her mom when she's not in the hospital. Austin shuttles between his house, his grandmother's and Kristy's, with clothes in each place.

"But we've had people to help us get through it, so it's not been nothing major," Austin said.

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Fred Rogers, of Mr. Rogers fame on PBS, was fond of telling how his mother would reassure him as a boy after seeing some of the horror of the evening news. She would tell him to look for the helpers. In times of trouble and disaster, there are always helpers. Even in the Murphys' turmoil, the community has rallied around them with everything from encouragement to meals.

On April 8, just a month after her diagnosis, Paula was walking up to the field talking with her mom. She could see Northern Vance had on bright green shirts, but thought nothing of it and kept on talking. It wasn't until pitcher Qwadre Hanks walked closer that she could see her name on the back of the shirt.

Austin and head coach Benji Nelson came up with the idea to honor Paula and show solidarity. There was enough interest by the community that Kristy plans on doing a fundraiser later in the summer to help with medical costs. Kristy also coaches a volleyball team that won a tournament in March. Every time they broke the huddle during the tourney, they shouted, "Paula!"

"You don't realize how lucky you are until you have friends," Paula said, clear blue eyes misting with tears. "I work my butt off to make money, I worked four jobs, and that didn't mean anything. I had the lottery of friends. I've got so many friends I didn't even know support me and I'm thankful for that."

"And when I get well, I'm not going to go back

to working four jobs, because it don't mean anything."

The disease has also helped draw the family closer together. Paula's relationship with her mom and sister have improved, and they spend more time together. Some of that is out of necessity — either Kristy or her mother are with Paula at the hospital or their house — but there is more quality time spent together.

"Before you go through something like this, you get so busy living your life and you don't spend quality time together," Kristy said. "Now we spend quality time together. Just even coming here. We talk about things, things you take for granted."

Still, sometimes Paula needs a break from people or they need a break from her. Her mom's house is within walking distance of hers, so during some days at home she'll go seeking some alone time.

Then sometimes Austin will come home, and he'll be in his room while Paula's in hers, both watching TV in companionable silence.

For a moment, it's just like normal.

lulrich@hendersondispatch.com