November 4, 2010

SPoRTS

In full he applied and basically was the candi-
date that stood out among all the others,” Kenney
added.

Shinnick was officially hired on Dec. 13, 2005, after a search that included
more than 180 potential applic-
ants.

“Shinnick’s competency and character impressed everyone that he came into
contact with during the inter-
view process,” Kenney said at that
time.

“He demonstrated through his previous coach-
ing experiences that he is
truly committed to the UNCP mission pre-
paring champions,” Kenney finished that
day.

Second half

By the time the Bob
Canton Fieldhouse
was completed in 2007, the
student athletics that
would make up the first
group of Bobcats football players had
already completed close to a year of practices leading up to that first game.

Kenney points to sev-
eral moments that
helped him realize the
closing near of the
campus was a reality.

He recalls a meeting in
Davidson’s Provost’s
Art Center in 2006 with Coach
Shinnick and the first crop of
players.

“I said, ‘Wow, there are
home games, we’re going
to campus that are going to be
by playing football,’” Ken-
ney remembers of that ini-
tial meeting.

Shinnick also points to
the completion of the field-
house, the first spring game
in 2007 and the first day of
practice in ’07 with the first
game weeks away as other
key moments.

Game time

At last, the moment ar-
nives.

After months and years
of hounding everything from a
schedule, to hiring coaches, desig-
nning uniforms down to pur-
chasing and installing the great
stands – things that had
finally arrived.

On Sept. 1, 2007, the
Braves’ football team trav-
elled to face NCAA Division I foe Davidson College
in UNCP’s first game on the
gridiron in 56 years.

After allowing Davi-
sion to jump out to a 15-
point lead, the Braves even-
ly fell 31-21, but the final
score is and will be
remembered today.

Nine buses and more
than 2,000 UNCP fans
made the trip to Davi-
sion to watch the first
Braves game enter into the world of col-
lege football.

“When I went to the
Davidson game that first
year and we had more
UNCP fans there than
Davidson did, I knew we
had made the right
decision without a doubt,” Dr.
Meadors said about the first
game.

“I did get some bumps
when we ran out onto the field
against Davidsson the
first game,” Kenney said of
his feelings that first game.

“I’m hearing the march-
ing band play, and I’m see-
ing all these people travel
from Robeson County to
Davidson,” Kenney added.

Kenney also recalls the
Davidsson officials telling
him they had never had a
crowd as big as UNCP’s for a
non-conference game.

A week after traveling to
Davidson, UNCP played its
first home game, win-
ing a tight battle over Greensboro
College, 26-20, for the school’s first football
win since 1952.

Of course, everyone
didn’t run as smoothly as
they do on game days now.

“That first home foot-
ball game against Greens-
boro, we were playing at one
o’clock that morning,” Ken-
ney recalls.

“We played in a
tight battle over Greensboro
College with the stadium packed with students and
community people was a
great feeling for the Univer-
sity community,” Dr.
Meadors said of the first
wins coming at home.

The first edition of the
UNCP football team fin-
ishied 6-6, with three of
those wins coming at home.

After that first season,
the Braves racked up back-
to-back 9-1 seasons, culmi-
ating with a selection into
the NCAA Division II play-
offs in 2008.

“I was so proud we
made the NCAA’s. To be in
our third season and make
the playoffs, that’s some-
thing to celebrate,” Kenney
said of the program’s
success.

“Whoever starts Divi-
sion II football, they have to
hang their hat on one thing
in order to survive, and we
should always be
preparing for success,” Dr.
Meadors said.

“The process is not
over. The bulk of it, the
heavy lifting, is, but it’s not
finished yet,” Kenney said.

While the sounds of
pads and helmets knocking
on Saturdays, the fall are
commonplace for students and
community members now,
10 years ago, the idea
was first hatched.

Braves everywhere can
only hope that the next 10 years
are as exciting as the opening
decade has been.

Football - the perfect fit for Pembroke

continued from 1B

A UNCP football record 6,429 fans attended the Two Rivers Classic game between the Braves and Fayetteville State on Sept. 4, 2010.

In addition to starting the football program, UNCP began the Two Rivers Classic, an annual meeting against regional rival Fayetteville State. The Braves have captured the Two Rivers Cup in the first two instalments of the series.

UNCP head coach-Pete Shinnick talks with his team before the Two Rivers Classic game against Davidson College last season. Shinnick has tallied 27 wins in three seasons with UNCP.

UNCP Director of Athletics Dan Kenney played a vital role in bringing football to campus and for this decade.

Phto by Nick Phillips

In the end, we are here to serve our students and our University community, and we should always be guided by the simple prin-
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“Whatever happens, one thing is
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