

HOOKED ON THE OUTDOORS

By Mike Johnson

When we moved to North Carolina nearly 5 years ago I found there is a special name for “types” like us. What kind of type are we you might be thinking. We grew up in the Northeast, moved to Florida for a good chunk of years, then here to North Carolina. We are called “Halfbacks”....moving half way back to where we originally started from on our travels up and down the East coast. Now this moniker is actually quite timely and topical to this edition’s focus, because we are going to be talking about some football.

Yes, we have lived here long enough to understand basketball is king in Carolina, but we are truly blessed from a geography standpoint to have some absolutely spectacular collegiate sports available to us on a year round basis. North Carolina is truly the heart of the ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference), and one can travel within a matter of hours to get to the campuses of a good chunk of the schools that comprise the ACC (UNC, Duke, NC State, Wake Forest). With the weather cooling off and trees exploding in brilliant autumnal colors, there is no better thing to do on a Saturday then catch a big time college football game live and in person.

While the field is the same and the rules very similar to professional football, there is a certain energy, passion, and pageantry in college football that distinguishes it from the pro version, and really any other sport in the country. Think about it... you have large marching bands, blaring school fight songs, opposing school colors, alumni and fans of all shapes, sizes and ages and not to mention the opposing teams all coming together in beautiful visual and audio collage for a 3 hour period all in one place just about every Saturday afternoon from September through November. It is hard to do justice to the experience of what college football is in words....it is really just something one needs to go out and experience at least once (and chances are if you do it once, you’ll get hooked and go back for more).

So for the college football novices, some helpful hints about attending a college football game. Get to the stadium early...at least 2 hours before the scheduled kick off time. You’ll beat most of the traffic, you will find some prime parking spots, and you will get to participate in the “mandatory” pre-game ritual of tailgating. Back a cooler full of food & drink, bring a few lawn chairs, bring a football to toss around, and of course if you have a corn hole game bring it by all means. You will make lots of new friends while tailgating. You’ll want to get to your seats in the stadium at least 30 minutes prior to kick off....you do not want to miss the teams entering the field prior to kick-off as many of them have special rituals they do at this time (running in through smoke, touching a special rock, etc.). Yes, this may seem a bit silly to some, but tradition is such an important fabric which weaves through the college football game.

Half time is another highlight for many attending college football games; this is when the marching bands from the schools perform. After the game head back to your car, break out the cars and cooler again and let the initial wave to cars/traffic leaving the stadium get on their way. While you might not be the first ones home after the game, you won’t have the experience of

sitting in post-game stop and go traffic put a damper on what should be an amazing and memorable day (of course it is even a bit more amazing if the team you happen to be rooting for won the game).

We'll be taking a few Saturdays off this fall from fishing and be hitting some college football games; we hope to see you out there too (Go Canes....sorry I couldn't resist). Until next time my friends, get out there, keep active, and of course.....Tight Lines!!!