

# Braves open season with sweep

By Nick Phillips  
Sports Editor

The UNCP baseball team opened its 2011 season on Feb. 5 and 6 when they hosted Anderson at Sammy Cox Field with a three-game sweep.

The Braves were originally scheduled to begin play with a doubleheader on Saturday and play the series finale on Sunday, but rain in the area flipped the schedule and provided a Sunday doubleheader.

In the Saturday opener, the Braves collected 12 hits to propel them towards a 9-3 win.

UNCP senior Keith Whitman went 3-for-4 at the plate with a double and two singles, junior Josh Haley homered and tallied two walks with a 2-for-3 hitting line and juniors Brad

Bridgeman and J.J. Williams each went 2-for-4 in their Black and Gold debuts.

UNCP senior Tyler Wood got the start and picked up the win after giving up nine hits over nine innings of work while also striking out six and giving up just three runs.

Sophomore Brantley Hatrich struck out four in three innings of relief before senior Brian Willis struck out one in the final inning.

Haley's leadoff homer in the bottom of the first gave the Braves an early lead before UNCP added a run in the third, fourth and fifth innings to take a 5-0 lead.

Anderson cut into the UNCP lead with three runs in the top of the sixth inning, before the Braves

added another run in the bottom of the sixth before a three-run eighth inning finished the game off.

## Game two

In the series' second game, UNCP received a strong pitching effort from senior Brad Isom as they came away with an 8-3 win.

Isom struck out a career-high eight batters over seven innings of work while giving up just four hits and two unearned runs for his first career win.

Senior reliever Weston Sherrill struck out three in the final two innings of work in the Braves win.

Offensively, UNCP tallied all of its runs in the first and fourth innings with four runs in each inning.

Three Braves tallied two hits, including redshirt-junior Kyle Adair, who

picked up two RBIs while going 2-for-4.

Whitman knocked a double as part of his 2-for-3 day and Bridgeman singled and doubled in five plate appearances.

UNCP sent eight batters to the plate in the bottom of the first and 10 Braves stepped to the plate in the fourth as all eight runs came in the two frames.

## Finale

In the series' finale, UNCP senior starting pitcher Josh Bagley faced 14 batters before giving up a hit in the fifth inning, as the Braves finished off Anderson with a 6-1 win.

Eight different Braves picked up a hit in the final game, with sophomore Aaron Parnell blasting a three-run homer in the third inning.

Haley finished 2-for-4 with a triple as he also scored, while Williams and freshman Stephen McKinney each finished 2-for-3 at the plate.

Redshirt-junior Braxton Lewis finished out the contest with a hitless inning while striking out one batter to close the weekend sweep.

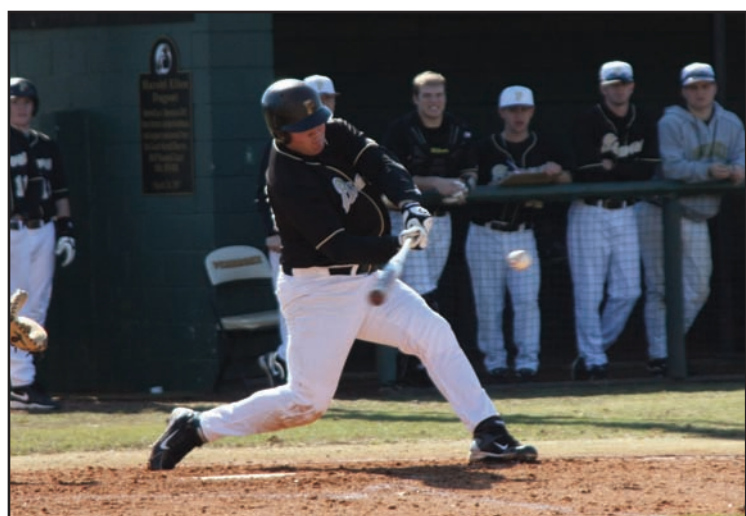
Senior Jason Coker drove in the first run of the finale with a RBI groundout in the first inning to put the Braves on the board.

Haley tripled to start the third inning before scoring on a RBI single from Coker. With Coker and Brandon Huffman on base, Parnell delivered his homer to dead centerfield to up the lead to 5-0.

UNCP closed out the scoring on junior Alex Pearce's RBI sacrifice fly in the sixth inning.



UNCP pitcher Brad Isom picked up his first career victory in the Braves' 8-3 game two win in their series against Anderson.



Braves senior Keith Whitman knocked two doubles and two singles over the three-game weekend series against Anderson.



Braves senior Joe Mangum rounds first base after a hit in the weekend series against Anderson. Mangum tallied a RBI and scored a run in UNCP's three-game series sweep.

## Braves' Priest more than a basketball player

By Hayley Burgess  
Managing Editor

For most students, juggling school and a job is difficult, but add in also playing a sport and most would have a hard time keeping up. That isn't the case for Nathan Priest who is a student-athlete and works in the UNCP Bookstore.

Priest, a junior from Tar Heel, N.C., who plays forward on the UNCP men's basketball team, works as a sales associate in the Bookstore and is a Chemistry

major. He has had to learn how to use his time wisely when it comes to playing and his studies.

"Managing time with practice and my studies and with working 20 plus hours a week at the bookstore makes things difficult at times," Priest said.

One of the difficulties he has had to work with is making up the class time he misses when he is on the road with the basketball team.

"Some teachers make it mandatory to come to different class hours when I

have to travel and some teachers aren't as flexible," Priest said.

"Sometimes I have to come by and spend time in their office or do online work," he said.

## Extracurricular activities

As if working and being a student-athlete aren't enough, Priest is also involved in Chemistry Club, Student Athletic Advisory Committee and goes to church whenever he can at home.

Priest said he tries to go home whenever he gets the chance to try and relax, even though he doesn't have much time to relax.

"I don't really have much time to relax, but I like to go home and spend time with my girlfriend and just chill out," Priest said.

Priest said the people he looks up to the most are his parents because of the way they brought him up.

"They brought me up understanding values and making me understand discipline is essential to being successful in life," Priest said.

Priest's dad, Charlie, ran track at UNCP, but that was not Priest's reason for coming to Pembroke.

Priest said he came to visit UNCP and met Coach Ben Miller during Miller's first day on the job and



UNCP junior Nate Priest goes up for a shot in a game earlier this season. Priest was averaging 8.9 points per game through Jan. 30.

liked him.

"I said if he offered me a scholarship right now, I would sign, and I think he thought I was joking," Priest said.

As of Jan. 30, Priest has scored an average of 8.9 points per game, has 22 blocks, 15 steals and 104 rebounds in 19 games of this season.

Being able to stay close to his family and serious girlfriend was also a plus to attending UNCP.

Being on the basketball team has helped Priest develop important skills in both his athletic and personal life.

"It's made me develop strong leadership skills," Priest said.

"I've learned that it's not always what I want," he said, "but what the team needs, and I've been building a great bond with teammates I've had over the past years."

## Future

After he graduates, Priest is debating going to Pharmacy school or going overseas to continue his basketball career.

"I'm hoping to play for England, but honestly I'll go wherever I get offered the most," he said.



Nate Priest re-shelves sweatshirts while working at the UNCP Bookstore during a recent day.