

Charlotte being considered for 3 college football games

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Can Charlotte develop a consistent Division I college football presence?

Two major college games may be coming to Charlotte the next two seasons:

- North Carolina and N.C. State are discussing a deal to play their ACC game in Ericsson Stadium on Saturday, Nov. 28, the week of Thanksgiving.

- East Carolina is considering moving its scheduled 1999 game with West Virginia to Ericsson and making it a Sept. 4 opener.

- And Winston-Salem State, a Division II school, is considering playing Grambling at Memorial Stadium as an option this fall.

"The date has been set aside, and the teams (North Carolina and N.C. State) are willing to play on that date," said Raycom Sports vice president Ken Haines. "All the financial terms have not been worked out and who does what is not in place yet. The discussions are not quite concluded yet."

N.C. State athletics director Les Robinson, though, said things aren't that far along. "I don't think it's a done deal by any means," he said. "We're still just talking."

"(North Carolina athletics director) Dick Baddour and I are going to meet in the next two weeks."

The Tar Heels-Wolfpack game would count as North Carolina's home game. It would potentially be part of a two-year deal for Charlotte. Negotiations are under way with ESPN to move the teams' 1999 game — N.C. State's home game — to a Thursday night in 72,500-seat Ericsson.

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Haines, for one, hopes the brief series is the beginning.

"Our desire is to bring big-time college football to Charlotte on an annual basis, and the ACC would be the most attractive way to do that," he said.

The ECU-West Virginia game is also a strong possibility, Pirates athletics director Mike Hamrick said.

Hamrick said his school had a great experience when the Pirates played the first college game in Ericsson, in November 1996. But he also has to consider that ECU's Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium will have 9,400 more seats by then, boosting capacity to 44,500.

Hamrick also said he was pleased with ECU's recent success in scheduling upcoming games with in-state ACC opponents:

- N.C. State plays in Greenville in 1999, and the teams meet in Charlotte in 2004 or sooner.

- The Pirates play North Carolina in Chapel Hill in 2001 and in Greenville in 2003.

- ECU begins a four-game series with Duke in 1999 in Greenville. The teams play in 2000 and 2002 in Durham, then conclude the series at East Carolina in 2003.

- Wake Forest continues an eight game, home-and-home series with the Pirates that began this year. The other seven games are from 2001 to 2007.

Charlotte may also get the Winston-Salem State-Grambling game. It's the Rams' home game and their call.