

The Charlotte Observer

ROLFE NEILL, *Chairman and Publisher*

RICHARD A. OPPEL, *Editor*

ROBERTO SUAREZ, *President*

JERRY SHINN, *Editor of the Editorial Pages*

MARK ETHRIDGE III, *Managing Editor*

JACK CLAIBORNE, ED WILLIAMS, TOM BRADBURY, *Associate Editors*

Wednesday, February 5, 1986

Editorials



"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

—Allen H. Neuharth
Chairman and Founder
Sept. 15, 1982

John C. Quinn
Editor

John Seigenthaler
Editorial Director

OPINION

Reagan Vs. UNC-Georgia Tech

WBTV has taken it on the chin from a few critics for not interrupting last night's UNC-Georgia Tech basketball game for the State of the Union message. The fault, if there is any, seems to us to lie with President Reagan, not WBTV. He changed the time of his speech so it wouldn't conflict with NBC-TV's pseudo-historical celebration of ambition, lust and carnage, "Peter the Great." How could a man of his political savvy then pick a time that conflicts with a showdown between the No. 1 and No. 2 basketball teams in the nation?

It's not as though WBTV's decision — the same one made by WFMY in

Greensboro and WRAL in Raleigh — kept people in the dark about the speech. Other stations carried it live, WBTV showed it on tape after the game, and newscasts and newspapers covered it fully.

As a rule, of course, WBTV should carry the State of the Union address. As a rule, it does. But breaking that rule this time, under these circumstances, is understandable.

(By the way, we do not think it is true that if the world were ending during a televised ACC basketball game, WBTV would stick with the game and show the end of the world later, by tape delay.)

Basketball pre-empts president

Atlantic Coast Conference basketball is so popular in some places even President Reagan can't pre-empt it.

As Reagan addressed the nation Tuesday, thousands of fans tuned instead to TV stations broadcasting the game between No. 1 North Carolina and No. 2 Georgia Tech. Carolina won, 78-77, in overtime.

"That's a pretty tough call," said Will Davis, program director for WRAL, the CBS affiliate in Raleigh-Durham that chose the game over Reagan, who was shown at 11:30 p.m. EST.

Atlanta fans watched the game on independent station WGNX. And of all the ACC TV stations, only those in Charleston and Columbia, S.C., showed the president's address instead.

Said Ken Haines, spokesman for the Raycom/Jefferson Pilot Network that produces the ACC games:

"This could only happen in ACC territory. It proves how popular ACC basketball is."

— Rachel Shuster

USA TODAY

Columns

Gene Payne's View

