**News**

Team unites community

Panthers keep pounding into Spartanburg

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ew high school athletes are ever given the chance to train with professionals of their respective sport. After many years of the Carolina Panthers training at Wofford College, the Viking football players were given this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The Panthers came to Wofford College this year from July 28 until August 16. The Panthers held 14 practices throughout their time in Spartanburg. Wofford College was packed with people coming from all over to watch the Panthers play. By the first Thursday, the previous attendance record had been shattered. At the halfway point of training camp, 79,804 fans had attended the practices.

The runners up from last year’s Super Bowl brought tons of people to Spartanburg. The Panthers trained on the practice fields at Wofford and everyone was welcome to come and watch.

Wofford College, as well as the community of Spartanburg, receives many benefits from hosting the Panthers each year.

Laura Corbin, an employee at the office of marketing and communications at Wofford, gave statistics from attendance at the practices.

“The economic impact on the community is tremendous…This year we enjoyed a nearly 75 percent increase in visitors to the camp… a record 135,000-plus visitors attended the camp this year,” Corbin said.

Among the thousands of people attending the practices, many were Spartanburg High School students. After a record-breaking season last year, fans hope to see the team start another almost undefeated season.

Among these fans were seniors Rebecca Wise, Jonathan Cope, and Hudson McKinney. McKinney was especially enthusiastic about the upcoming season.

“After the Panthers had such a great year it was really hype to see them start the grind for this coming season. Also, there’s never a dull moment when Cam is out there enjoying the game,” McKinney said.

Along with practicing, the Panthers also appeared at popular destinations around the community. Star linebacker Luke Kuechly surprised fans at Krispy-Kreme, where he passed out doughnuts along with Shaq Thompson and Kony Ealy. Brenton Bersin, a 2012 Wofford graduate, shopped with kids at Academy. Later in the day, Kuechly took orders at the famous Spartanburg diner, the Beacon.

The Spartanburg High football team was able to attend and play in one practice with the Panthers. The players trained with many players that they idolize. The Panther’s were able to remember their own high school years though practicing with the Vikings. The Spartanburg players got to be up close and personal with professionals in their sport, and to see the top level of football.

Viking Head Coach Chris Miller, was thrilled about the opportunity given to him and his team.

“It was an unbelievable experience for me and my players. Being able to see, practice, and talk to the heroes of our sport was just an amazing experience,” Miller said.