



The Cavalier Daily

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 08, 2004

TODAY'S PAPER
NEWS
SPORTS
OPINION
LIFE
COMICS
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT
OTHER WEEKLIES
Health & Sexuality
Focus
Science
ARCHIVES
Browse
Search
Photo Archive
RESOURCES
Corrections
Classified Ads
Join the CD
About the CD
Advertising
Staff
Policy Manual
CONTACT
Editors
Webmaster
Ombudsman
FEATURES
The Future
LINKS
Cavalier Daily
Alumni Assoc.
Student Voice
University of Virginia
QUICK MOVE
Previous Issue
Next Issue

'One time, at band camp...'

A day in the life of new the Cavalier Marching Band

Preston Gisch, Cavalier Daily Perspective



Students in the new Cavalier Marching Band practice for their opening performance on Sept. 11.

PETER DUNN | CAVALIER DAILY



Student Cavalier M practice for performan

The blocky, red numbers stare me in the face -- "6:29."

One minute away from another August day of band camp.

One minute and a few weeks away from our first show, our first test.

One minute and generations away from where this band has been and where it will be.



Student Cavalier M practice for performan

View other story in the

The numbers blink "6:30." It's go time.

I slide out of bed, careful not to wake m -- I have the early shower shift -- and ex morning routine, knees aching, thighs n voice hoarse from the previous day's dr Tip-toeing the periphery of the hotel roo couch, I slip through the heavy wooden make my way into the posh, carpeted h

"Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Smith", I appreciation of the Cavalier Marching B benefactors, as I flip-flop down to the fir English Inn, a ritzy residence off of Rou

After a hurried, hot buffet breakfast, I jo saxophones on the first bus to The Park as "that intramurals place," where morn is held. Ten minutes later, we're deposit UTS buses before they make a second up the remainder of the Cavalier March

170-odd members strong.

Membership is eclectic, consisting of University students, Piedmont Virginia Community College s non-students, including a Charlottesville resident, a University employee and a local high school s

By 9 a.m., the band -- including the color guard -- covers fully one-third of the spray-painted footba "block," or four-by-four step grid. After stretching, we take a lap around the field and begin mornin

The temperature steadily rises with the intensity of our rehearsal, and the morning progresses with collective, uneven tanning continues -- pinewood forearms darkening as my balsa wood-biceps m sleeved aversion to the sun.

From atop his mechanical lift, Mr. Pease, the band's director, delegates the drill instruction via wireless headset. Graduate assistants scurry about the field like worker bees, officious binders in hand, pointing out weak spots in marching formations and delineating the proper execution of the drill. Sean and Dre, graduate assistants, dedicate dozens of hours to the band each week, writing marching drill sets, drum line music and transcribing radio singles into stand tunes for music in between football plays. The graduate assistants and Associate Director Mr. Phillips, the drum majors, Logan and Woody, lead the band, using cupped hands and vocal chords as weapons against heat-induced apathy.

The morning rehearsal winds down and we return to the Inn for a catered lunch. One day it was T. Sub, another day, Arby's another. (Food is important at band camp.) I snag a sandwich after a wait in line and pull up a chair at a table of my exhausted peers. Despite our fatigue, however, the dining area is abuzz with excited chatter, that frenetic extroversion that only comes with the first weeks of a fresh season. Some tables discuss the Olympics. Other tables discuss nighttime social events, past and present: Night, Putt-Putt Night, Skit Night. At my table, we discuss Sept. 11, the band's debut. I'm excited, I hope everything goes well. I want the crowd to like us.

Lunch winds down after an hour, and it's straight into sectionals for an afternoon of music rehearsal. Each musical instrument or family of instruments breaks off into separate conference rooms at the hotel for three hours to fine-tune and memorize music for the pre-game and first show. Today, we work the music: Cavalier Fanfare, the Cav Song, Rugby Road, Glory to Virginia and more.

We play once looking at the music. We play twice looking at the music. We play the first half memorized, we play the second half with the music. We play it all memorized. Next song.

The afternoon sectionals are short, as always, and dinner comes by 4:30. Cici's all-you-can-eat pizza night, Golden Corral another night, Wood Grill Buffet yet another. (Food is important at band camp.) Recharged by a less-active afternoon, the evening meal tables bustle with even more vibrant conversation. One table considers the history of marching at the University. One person says there used to be a marching band but their equipment was burned in a train fire and there wasn't money to replace it, so the group decided to knock on wood.

After dinner, it's back to the buses for evening drill work. Most nights, we'd be at the Turf Field adjacent to University Hall, but tonight is different. First, a quick stop at the Inn to change into our surrogate uniforms. Our marching shoes, gloves, pants, coats and hats will arrive piecemeal as late as the week before our performance. Clad in dark blue athletic shorts and white T-shirts monogrammed with the band's logo, we board the buses for Scott Stadium, our evening destination. There we assemble our instruments and coordinate our tag in the tunnels at the foot of the field. After an abbreviated warm-up, we form triple-wide columns in each tunnel, and await command. A short drum line cadence later, we're marching -- piccolo, sousaphones and clarinets streaming out of the tunnels.

In an instant, we're on the field, high-stepping across the end zone, pivoting just past the goal line, marking time, snap-turning, blood rushing, heart pounding, head throbbing, hands shaking.

Halfway up the stadium, just below the luxury boxes above the 50-yard line on the student side of the stadium, Resident Advisors -- in town for training -- are bellowing, one one-thousandth the size of a capacity crowd in spirit, 60,000 strong.

On the press box side of the stadium, reporters are scattered among the many sections, notebooks open. There's a photographer on the 40-yard line and another with a telephoto lens above the nearside stands, smiling and marching, playing the songs. Our songs.

During a water break, photographers weave in and out of clustered marchers as reporters question eager interviewees. With a few other members, I make my way into the stands, where the charter members of the Cavalier Band Fan program are enjoying the show.

An enthusiastic yelp from Pease and the water break is over, the band scrambles back into position.

work the final move of the pre-game, the grand finale, the final form.

"March and play it this time," Pease says, our instruments snap to set, alert fingers excitedly pepp keypads.

Four snare hits and we're off. I forward march 16, backward march eight, mark time 16, slide right down, guiding center, forward march eight, turn left four and forward march 48 straight into the he stadium, fortissimo notes flying from my instrument at a volume I didn't know I had. A grand cut of snap of horns down, and my ears ring as 170-plus united voices echo, swirling around the stadiun nighttime air.

Chest heaving, I turn to Woody, our Drum Major, our leader. Strands of hair cling to my forehead, sweat drips into my eyes as my nostrils flare in and out, in and out. A waxing moon rises over the Stadium, and I steady my breathing, count my heart rate. So many beats per minute. Just one mir

One minute away from the end of practice.

One minute and a few weeks away from Sept. 11.

One minute and generations away from where this band has been and where it will be.

[Other Articles by Preston Gisch](#)

[Print-friendly Version](#)

[Email This Article](#)

Paid Advertisement

Cville Area Real Estate

Water & Golf Front Homes, Gated Lake/Golf Communities, Prices & Info
www.StrongTeamRealtors.com