



Cam's Challenge Finale: Freddie Pierce, Deacon Earl officially claim championship

By News-Argus Staff
Published in Sports on April 9, 2015 1:48 PM

Freddie Pierce's NCAA bracket wasn't even close.

It's a good thing Deacon Earl was there to remedy that.

Pierce, winner of the inaugural Cam's Challenge, listened to his wooden friend and reaped the benefits.

Gonzaga? Not a chance, Earl told him.

This was Duke's year.

Although the bracket challenge was new to Goldsboro, Pierce is not. Born and raised in Wayne County, he graduated from University of Mount Olive with a degree of psychology. Since then, his travels have taken him -- and Earl -- all across the globe, eventually bringing them back home. He spent over 25 years on the road, but his plans changed about five years ago.

"Once I finished being on the road, I felt like The Lord was calling me into the ministry," he said. "I didn't know where I was going to go or what I was going to do."

Pierce landed at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, where he serves as the youth and associate pastor. His primary work, he says, is with the youth of the community.

Earl has retired.

"I don't work any more," he said. "You get to 80 and you've got to stop."

Pierce and Earl have been partners in comedy for a little over 10 years now. Together, they've played gigs like The Grand Ole Opry, Entertainment Tonight and Monday Night Football.

They've even played in front of former Presidents Ronald Reagan (of which Freddie has a spot-on impression of) and George Bush.

Ventriloquism has been a major part of Pierce's entire life. Starting at five years old, he has spent decades traveling and perfecting his craft.

"I was always amazed with ventriloquism," he said. "I was fortunate enough that when I finished college to go on the road and stay there for 25 years."

It was 10 years ago that Freddie and Earl first got together.

"Of all the ventriloquist figures, Earl has been the one that everybody loved the best," he said.

Earl didn't disagree.

"That's right. People always say they either know one like me or are married to one like me."

As the expression goes, to the victor goes the spoils. Because of their victory, the Goldsboro News-Argus will donate \$100, in their name to the charity of their choice.

With his extensive background in faith-based outreach, the choice was simple. Pierce plans to donate the money to a group called The Gideons. According to their website, the group "focuses on distributing complete Bibles, New Testaments and portions thereof."

Pierce is confident that \$100 can make quite an impact. He estimated the money can buy upwards of 150 New Testaments that will be handed out to people in over 176 countries.

"Because of my Christian background, I wanted to do something for people who weren't Christians," he said. "To pass out Bibles is one of the most amazing things. They mean so much to me because these

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bibles are going to get picked up by people we don't know."

Earl had a different charity in mind.

"Can I tell you where I'd like to donate to?" he asked. "It's called Earl's bank."

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