



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

September 23, 2025

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Foundation Stuart Hair

Programs

Elizabeth Teagarden



WILL PITTS – SPORTS DUDE

by **Marilynn Bowler**

Our speaker on Tuesday stood tall behind the MIC, not only in physical stature but because he walks in the shoes of some of Charlotte's most influential and important business organizers and community leaders ~ like Danny Morrison, Steve Luquire, Pat Rogers, Johnny Harris and Will Webb among others ~ who have made our Queen City a hub for sporting events ranging from the men's and women's Final Fours to the Continental Tire Bowl (now known as the Duke's Mayo bowl) to the ACC Football Championships to the MLS All-Star Game to Meck Mile and the amazing Savannah Bananas games. You get the picture.

In its twenty-year history, what began as the Charlotte Regional Sports Commission, dedicated to driving economic impact by attracting a variety of sporting events to our city (i.e., college and amateur events such as golfing, football, boxing, and running), has evolved into a major influencer and has been renamed as the Charlotte Sports Foundation. Our speaker today - Will Pitts - is the CEO of that incredible team made up of both staff, Board members, and volunteers.

Will is a graduate of Rhodes College in Tennessee, where he stood out as a star track and field athlete. He has an MBA from Wake Forest University and lives in Charlotte with his wife and their three children. As **Linwood Bolles** succinctly said it in his introduction of Will, "If it involves sports, chances are Will has been a part of it in some way."

Touching on the huge impact major sporting events have had on Charlotte's

economy, in 2024 alone, those events produced and sponsored by the Charlotte Sports Foundation have seen over 211,000 fans stream into Bank of America Stadium and nearby venues, with TV viewership topping just under 9 million, producing an astounding \$90 million into our local economy.

Citing its mission, the Charlotte Sports Foundation continues to make plans for even bigger and more diverse sporting events by ~ in Will's words ~ "blending sports with entertainment in new and creative ways." Coming up soon are the Big South Invitational and the Ally Tip-Off. On the books are women's lacrosse, men's basketball, and baseball. Soccer is soon to follow. Believe it or not, the Sports Foundation has scheduled major football matchups through 2032.

During the Q&A, Will shared that the World Military Games will be held in Charlotte in 2027; plans are to bring Professional Tennis here, and racquet sports like pickleball are on the list to pursue.

Speaking candidly about transportation and security, Will referred to the importance of city leaders who are addressing those challenges via a transportation referendum on the ballot in November. Safety and accessibility are crucial, he said.

Will Pitts, we'll welcome you back to Charlotte Rotary at any time!

**Unfortunately, this week's video is unavailable due to technical difficulties.*