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CAMPUS NEWS

Gardner-Webb Marching Bulldogs Prepare for Sept. 18 Debut in Spangler Stadium

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2021



Halftime Show, ‘Guess Who’s Back?’ Features Music From Backstreet Boys, Chipmunks and Others

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Adding to the excitement of the first home football game on Sept. 18 at Gardner-Webb University will be the return of the Marching Bulldogs. The band’s 43 members have been working since August on the halftime show and other music for game day. The performance will be highlighted by the group’s impressive new uniforms.

Interim Director Michael Henderson said the group is eagerly preparing for the first performance. “The students have worked very hard to learn their music and movements,” he praised. “The music for our show is pretty demanding, and when you add our stands music and pregame music to it, you have to tip your hat to these guys for putting in the work.”

Gardner-Webb announced plans to rebuild the marching band in March 2020 with the support of President Dr. William Downs. The University previously had marching band programs in the 1940s, 1970s and most recently, from 2007 to 2017. Since then, a pep band has provided music for games.



▲ Interim Director Michael Henderson directs the Marching Bulldogs in their first practice on the football field.

“You really can’t have football Saturdays without the sights and sounds of a marching band, and I’m so excited that we’re bringing this southern staple back to Spangler Stadium,” shared Dr. Downs. “The Marching Bulldogs this fall may be small in size, but they’ll more than make up for that with raw energy and incredible effort. We have big dreams of building the band into ‘The Power Sound of The Springs,’ and one day we’ll look back on these hearty 43 members as the ones who launched it all!”

The halftime show is appropriately titled “Guess Who’s Back?” and features music by Larry Clark, The Backstreet Boys, Jackson 5, Alvin and the Chipmunks, Darius Rucker, and Simon and Garfunkel. “I consider it an honor and privilege to be able to lead the band into this new era,” Henderson shared. “They say that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. I believe we have taken a strong first step on this new journey, and we can’t wait for everyone to enjoy our music.”

Hailey Rodden, a first-year music education major from Belmont, N.C., is the drum major. She said her favorite part of the show is the second movement. She anticipates the crowd will dance and sing to the tunes during this section.



▲ Drum Major Hailey Rodden

A flute player, Rodden participated in marching band in high school and served as librarian and flute soloist. Last year, she was the drum major at South Point High School. “I wanted to be the drum major for Gardner-Webb to share my experiences in building musicianship and to ensure that everyone works together, having a good time,” she noted. “I have also gained a lot of personal growth in developing my leadership in music skills, which will be very beneficial to me as I plan to be a band director in the future.”

Besides leadership, she’s also improved her organization, time management and communication abilities. “Personally, I am a quiet individual, and I have already grown so much in speaking clearly and loudly, as well as growth in my confidence,” she asserted.

Rodden said the best part of being in a marching band is forming bonds with the other members. “I feel as though I am friends with everyone and that each person cares for those around them,” she said. “I have also enjoyed seeing these interactions between members who have never met before. I feel that I am making lifelong bonds while also learning lifelong skills! Band has truly been so much fun already, and I can’t wait to see what the rest of the season holds.”

[Learn more about the Marching Bulldogs program. \(https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-and-sciences/music/marching-band/\).](https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-and-sciences/music/marching-band/)



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