“Moonlight Madness,” held at Lumbee Guaranty Bank Court last Thursday, had a little bit of everything: a three-point contest, a dunk contest, fan competitions that saw Mike Okeke win free tuition for next semester; but when the ball left Tyrell Kirk’s hand to open up the intramural Black vs. Gold game, one thing was for certain-a new basketball season had begun for the UNCP men’s and women’s basketball teams.

 Each squad played in a 15-minute intrasquad game, with the men opening up. Tyrell Kirk demonstrated a deft shooting touch, drilling three 3-point shots in the short scrimmage. Junior forward Spencer Levi showed a deep touch as well, to go along with a physical inside game, pulling down the most rebounds for the Gold squad. The Gold squad came out on top, beating the Black squad 31-29. The men’s squad, who looked ready to get the season started, are looking to build upon their successful 2018-2019 season where they com-piled a record of 21-10 (15-7 in the Peach Belt Conference) and their sixth straight appearance in the Division II NCAA basketball tournament. The women’s team, looking to rebound from a rough 8-20 finish to their 2018-2019 season, started their scrimmage much as the men’s team did: by running and utilizing good ball movement to make open shots for the Lady Braves. Aliyah Farmer led all scorers with 6 points for the Gold, but the Black would ultimately pull out a win, 16-14. Both teams ran a frenetic pace and showed much more than what last year’s record would say of the team. After the game, women’s head coach John Haskins said, “I’m proud of how hard this team works, and feel we can be competitive in the Peach Belt this season.”

 The Lady Braves kick off their 2019-2020 campaign playing in the PBC/Conference Carolinas Challenge against Southern Wesleyan and Barton on Nov. 8th and 9th, with their first home game falling on Nov. 13th against inter-state rival Fayetteville State at Lumbee Guaranty Bank Court at 6 p.m. The men’s side opens up with two early season tournaments, followed by a game against Wingate before finally heading home to play four straight games at Lumbee Guaranty Bank Court on Dec. 1 against Mount Olive.