

SPORTS WEEK

B SECTION

DECEMBER 26, 2002

Gearing up

Players, coaches look forward to thrill of competition

JAESON PITT
FOR THE CHRONICLE

It was 9 a.m. on Saturday and junior varsity teams from Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County high schools were at Carver High School - host of the annual David Lash Tournament - to discuss the mechanics that have made the tournament a success since the event began in 1992. Robert Wynn, tournament director, spoke to the student-athletes, saying the tournament has a great past and that they only hope to improve and add to the tradition this year. This will be the tenth anniversary and it appears that the community can't get enough of the JV tournament. Play begins on Jan. 2 and lasts for three days. The tournament is sponsored by The Chron-

icle Wynn and Carver Principal Dan Piggot gave the players and coaches insight on how they should conduct themselves in order to "reflect well on (your) coaching staff, school, and parents", Wynn said. In the name of David Lash, who was known as a man who preached respect and responsibility until he passed away in 1997, Wynn mentioned that the tournament has upheld his name and values thus far.

"There has been no previous case of blatant disrespect" shown by a player or coaching staff to this date," Wynn said. Good sportsmanship is stressed, especially to the younger athletes on this level who are new to high-school athletics. Many kids plan

on seeing some of the same faces as they mature into varsity ballplayers and it is critical that poor behavior is ended immediately so that wholesome competition can take place, officials said.

Along with the rules, regulations and brief history of the Lash/Chronicle Tournament, they added some names of past players that came through the Lash Tournament and went on to do great things for their schools and some the collegiate level. Wynn spoke of William Butler, the first ever Lash Most Valuable Player, along with his brother John who went on to play at Appalachian State after four years of varsity. Other brothers were brought up, the Holcomb-Faye brothers of



This year's David Lash Tournament will start on Jan. 2 at Carver High School.

File Photo

See Lash on B3

Woods braces for layoff to rehab knee

BY DOUG FERGUSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Tiger Woods is giving up golf for swimming and a stationary bike, part of rehabilitation from knee surgery that will force him to take the longest break of his pro career.

Woods had surgery recently in Park City, Utah, to remove fluid around ligaments in his left knee and to remove a benign cyst. He has spent a week on his back and said, "It's driving me crazy."

"I can only sit still for so long and can't wait to get back on my feet, hopefully by the end of the week," Woods said last week in his monthly newsletter on www.tigerwoods.com.

Woods had a benign tumor removed from the same knee in 1994, but he said that wasn't related to the pain he felt throughout this year.

He first mentioned his ailing knee at the Tour Championship, then treated it with ice and anti-inflammatory drugs. Woods tweaked it again by hitting a sharp hook from an uphill lie in the rough at his Target World Challenge and decided it was time to get it fixed.

"The bottom line is, I just got tired of playing in pain every day, all day, and decided to take care of it," he said.

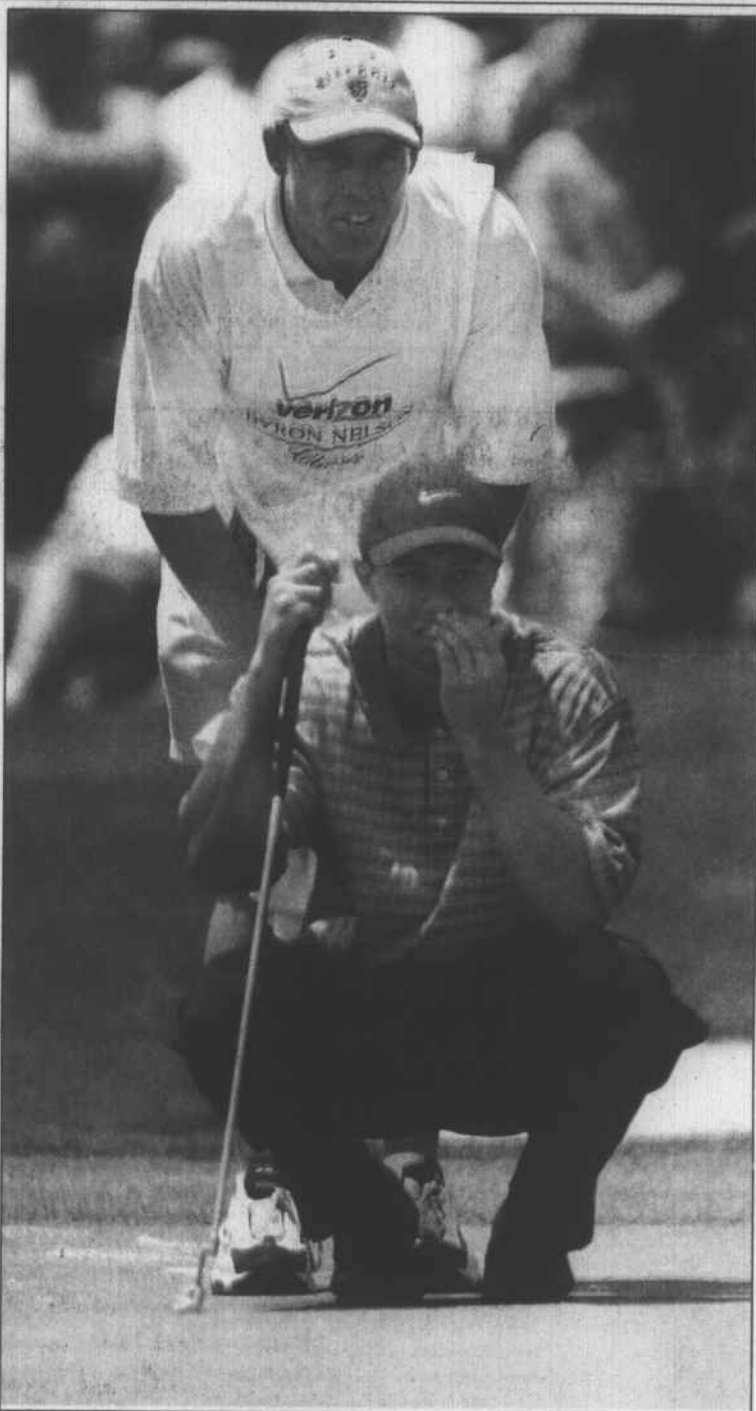
"The doctors have assured me everything went well, but you don't really know until you actually begin rehabilitation."

Woods said he would start with swimming, riding a bike and light strengthening.

At least he took care of business first - doing holiday shopping in the three days before the operation.

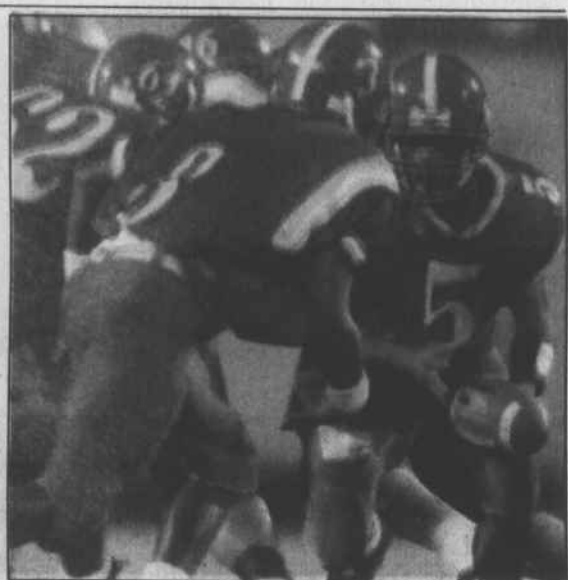
Even though Woods is one of the most recognizable athletes in the world, shopping is "really not that hard if you show up just when the stores open," he

See Woods on B2



Tiger Woods with his caddie, Steve Williams.

File Photo



Jamar Pitts

File Photo

Pitts now out of Weaks' shadow

BY SAM DAVIS
FOR THE CHRONICLE

RALEIGH - It took awhile, but Jamar Pitts has finally stepped out of the shadows. Pitts' performance through the 2002 football season helped boost Carver to the state 3-A football championship game. His steady performance at Carter-Finley Stadium on Saturday helped the Yellowjackets overwhelm Wilson Fike in a 34-0 Carver victory.

The victory finally put a smile on Pitts' face.

"This is what I came here for," Pitts said. "I wanted to lead this team to the state championship, and now we've accomplished that and it feels great."

Pitts was named the Yellowjackets' Most Outstanding Player. That honor helped him earn the same honor as one of his predecessors and finally put him on par with Courtney Weaks. Coaches and fans had often compared Pitts with Weaks.

"Maybe I won't have to hear it again," Pitts said.

Pitts certainly has heard enough of it since transferring to Carver before his junior season. The two shared many of the same attributes, especially those of stature. At 5-9, 170 pounds, Weaks was the catalyst for the 1998 Carver team that captured the state 3-A championship with a dramatic 33-28 come-from-behind victory over Kings Mountain. That permanently etched his name in the hearts of Carver fans.

Pitts heard the stories about Weaks' heroic play so much that he grew tired of them. After a 6-5 finish during the 2001 season, Pitts began this season with a renewed desire. Nothing less than a state championship would quiet Wilkes and other coaches who constantly talked to Pitts about his leadership skills.

"I'm a different type of play-

See Pitts on B2

Johnson's success could make him powerful owner

BY TIM WHITMIRE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Robert Johnson, the Black Entertainment Television founder tapped to own the NBA's new Charlotte expansion franchise, is well-known as a friend of Michael Jordan.

So eyebrows shot up recently when Johnson began a New York news conference by announcing his first hire.

The "hire," though, turned out not to be Air Jordan, but Heir Johnson - the cable magnate's 13-year-old son, Brett.

"Brett knows more about basketball than I'll ever know," Johnson said, joking that he and his son had reached an agreement on a salary of "room and board."

All kidding aside, many observers expect Johnson, the first black man to own controlling interest in a major pro sports fran-

chise, to build a strong organization in Charlotte.

"I think what he brings to this, which should be the case with any pro sports franchise owner, is genuine interest and real, sincere energy to get this done," said David Carter, who runs a sports marketing firm in Redondo Beach, Calif. "He just really has the passion to get this done."

Johnson started BET from scratch in 1980, ignoring widespread doubt about the viability of a cable channel aimed at black Americans. In 1991, he took the network public, making it the first black-owned company to list on the New York Stock Exchange.

Seven years later, disappointed by the stock's performance, Johnson went \$500 million into debt to take the company private again.

The risk paid off two years later, when he sold the network to media conglomerate Viacom in a

deal valued at nearly \$3 billion. It made Johnson the nation's first black billionaire.

"The most interesting thing about working with him is he's always moving on to the next thing," said BET president Debra Lee, who has worked with Johnson for 18 years. "You've got to run to keep up with him."

This year, Forbes magazine estimated Johnson's net worth at \$1.3 billion for its annual list of the richest Americans.

"Robert Johnson is the complete package, irrespective of his race," Denver-based sports marketing consultant Dean Bonham said. "He has the financial wherewithal; he has the business acumen, the reputation; and he happens to be African-American. To my knowledge, we've never seen that combination in any potential

See Johnson on B2



KRT photo by Harry Walker

Robert Johnson, left, the first African-American owner of an NBA basketball team, attends the Memphis Grizzlies-Washington Wizards game on Dec. 18.