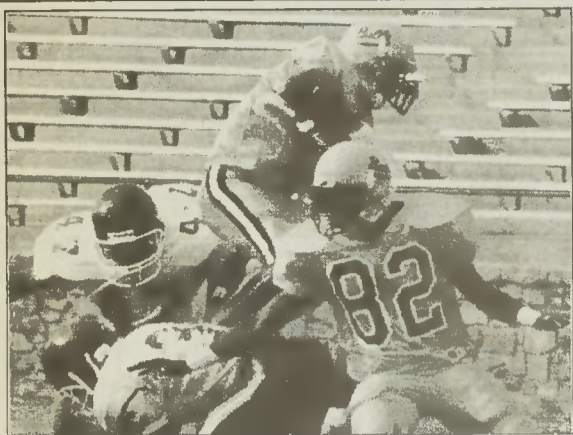


SPORTS

Time to make a statement



PHOTO/HERBERT L. WHITE

Reggie Lawrence hurdles two Benedict defenders on his way to a 66-yard punt return for a touchdown in Johnson C. Smith's 36-0 win. JCSU plays Virginia State Saturday.

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith can make its football season Saturday.

The Golden Bulls, who play Virginia State at 5 p.m. at Memorial Stadium, are trying to build on last week's 36-0 win over Benedict by taking out last year's CIAA champions and a consensus choice to repeat. The Trojans, still smarting over being denied a spot in the NCAA playoffs, beat Norfolk State 25-14 last week.

"It's a great test," Bulls coach

Johnson C. Smith gets a stiff test Saturday in 1995 CIAA champion Virginia State

Daryl McNeill said. "The CIAA champs are coming in here, and we want to set the tone for the CIAA this year. This is the game that's going to do it."

"It's back to even more intensity because they were the conference champs last year," linebacker Larcoy McRae said. "We've got to step it up more than we did (last week)."

Smith, which played the Trojans tough for a half before

fading in a 28-12 loss last season, is out to continue the rebuilding program that has led to three wins over the last four games dating back to last season. Virginia State, ranked No. 10 in the latest NCAA Division II poll, will provide stiff competition.

"We're really looking forward to that," split end Reggie Lawrence said. "We didn't look past Benedict, but we're really

looking forward to Virginia State because we should've beat them last year. We've got a lot to prove."

Lawrence will need a big game if Smith is to be successful. Against Benedict, the senior scored three touchdowns, two on passes from Chuck Young and another on a 66-yard punt return.

"We're looking for him to do some greater things throughout the season," McNeill said. "He's definitely one of our go-to guys."

Smith's special teams, which **See BULLS on page 11B**

Lions loaded again

By Eric Bozeman
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

There's only one formula for defending a state championship and West Charlotte Lions Coach Tom Knotts is banking on it.

"The biggest thing is you can hopefully refocus, and do it again," Knotts said. "Everybody comes back satisfied, and we don't want to be satisfied."

The Lions began the 1996 season by trouncing Anson County 43-7 with a powerful air attack that has West Charlotte ranked as one of the top teams in the nation.

"I think our offense is our strong point," Knotts said. We lost some good skill people, but everybody that we lost was replaced by people who could have stepped in last year and done a fine job. I think we throw the ball, that's what we do best, and we have big ol' linemen to protect us."

Some of the men in the trenches, who buy time for the Lions' air game, are in Knotts estimation, big time college prospects. The most notable are Jason Washington weighing in at 300 pounds, Michael Arceneaux at 290, and Louis Patterson at 250.

"They've worked hard in the weight room, they all bench right around 300 pounds," Knotts said.

Although the Lions have a mammoth line, Knotts still needs to address the issue of a signal caller, and he feels comfortable leaving the quarterbacking duties in the hands of Keith Matkins. Haji Kromah also got significant playing time last week, but Knotts refuses to open a quarterback controversy. Matkins completed 14-of-21 passes for 270 yards and two touchdowns against Anson County, while Kromah hit 5-of-7 for 111.

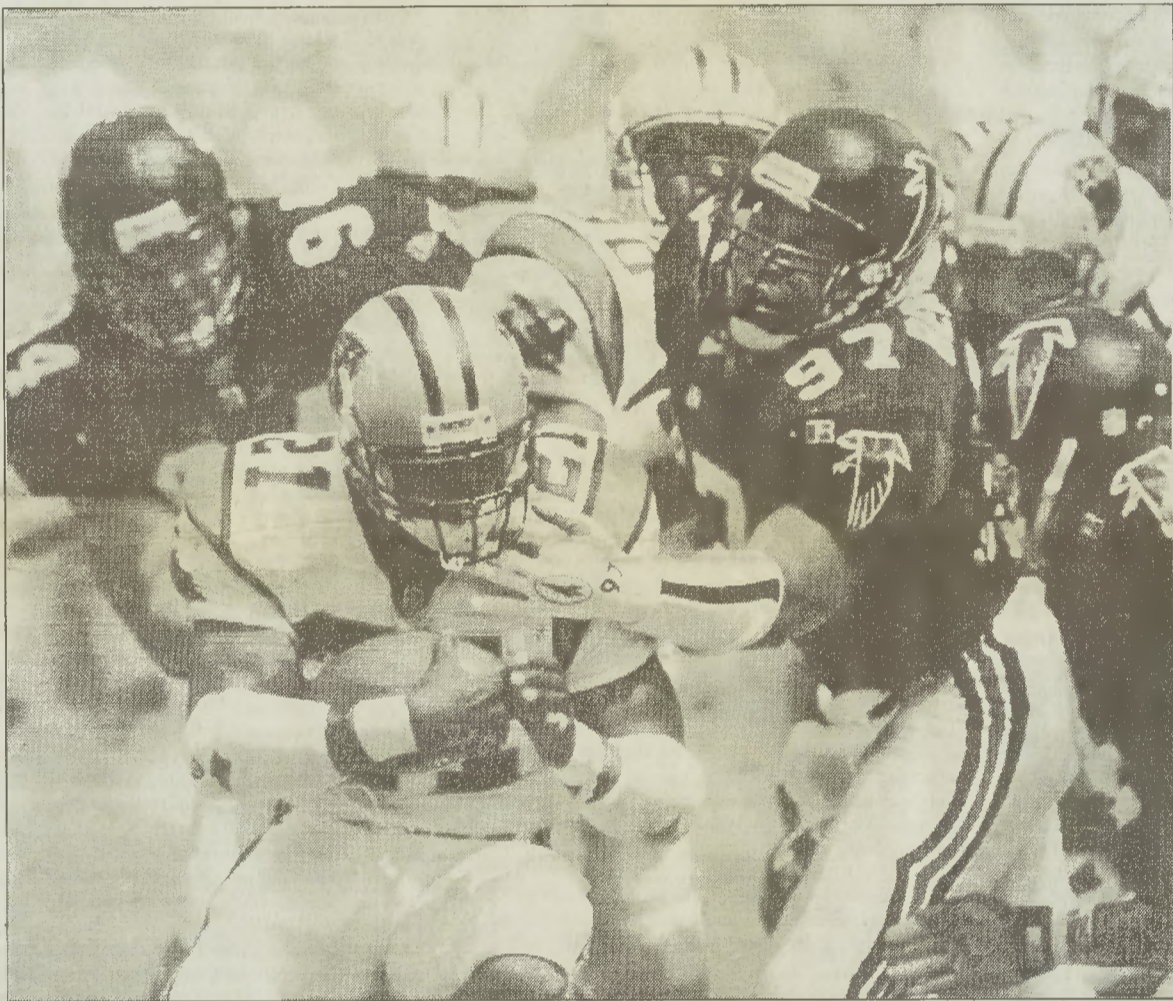
"I've told them both, I reserve the right to take either of them out...I'm going to be hard on them, and I'm not afraid to rotate them," he said.

The Lions offense is rounded out with Steve Shipp and Arjai Jackson at the wideout positions. Shipp, a 6-2 185 pounder has been heavily recruited by Notre Dame, Southern California, Duke, and Texas.

"He's probably our go to guy. I don't think he has great speed, he has good speed. I don't think he has great hands, he has good hands, but he just makes spectacular catches," Knotts said. "And because of that, Arjai will probably have a good year, because in high school you rarely see two good corners on defense."

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Prowling for two



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Carolina running back Tshimanga Biakabutuka is collared by Atlanta linebacker Cornelius Bennett after a short gain in the Panthers' 29-6 win last week. More on Biakabutuka's first NFL game can be found on page 4D.

Panthers try to build on opening success

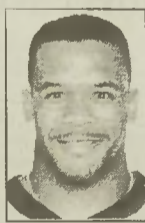
By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

At least the Carolina Panthers don't have to worry about getting off to a slow start this season.

The Panthers, who lost their first five games last year before rallying for a 7-9 finish, will go for their second win in as many games Sunday against New

Orleans. Recalling the horror story that started the 1995 season, Carolina went out and whipped Atlanta 29-6 last week, the Panthers' first opening day win.

"That's one of the things coach (Dom) Capers said: 'Let's not wait five games to come together and start playing hard,'" strong safety Pat Terrell said. "That's the idea we went



Terrell

into in training camp with."

Carolina's 30-some-thing defense had a major hand in the Atlanta win, causing the Falcons'

vaunted Red Gun offense to misfire in scoring territory. The Panthers recorded seven sacks, three from linebacker Lamar Lathon. They also kept the Falcons from scoring a touchdown while keeping constant pressure on Atlanta quarterback Jeff George.

"With Lamar Lathon and

See PANTHERS on page 11B

3-on-3 team eyes a basketball dynasty

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A quartet of Charlotte athletes are building a name among three-on-three basketball teams.

Next Up - consisting of 16-year-olds Michael Giles, Lamont Sherrill, Cedarrion Jackson and Tony Henry - are fixtures in street basketball festivals like Hoop It Up and Charlotte 3-on-3. The foursome has won two straight Charlotte 3-on-3 13-15 championships and added the under 6-foot title last month. They also won Hoop It Up titles in

Fort Mill, S.C., and Eastland Mall.

The thing that keeps the foursome competitive is familiarity, says Henry, the team captain. They started playing at the urging of Andrea Henry, Tony's mother.

"It was my mom's idea, and we just got together," Tony said.

Now that school is in session, the boys don't get together as often, getting together for an occasional pick-up game between competitions. Tony is a student at West Charlotte; Cousin Cedarrion attends South Mecklenburg; Lamont

goes to West Charlotte and Michael is at Garinger.

The foursome originally played Amateur Athletic Union together as 10-year-olds. From there, they starting honing their skills on the streets and built a championship bond.

"The chemistry" is what makes Next Up click, Tony Henry said. "We've been playing together for the last six years."

Taking Next Up's success to the under 6-foot division required some changes in their playing style. Competing

See NEXT UP on page 11B



PHOTO/ANDREA HENRY

Next Up, a foursome of Charlotte athletes, are eyeing a berth in the National Hoop It Up tournament in Kentucky.

Mason puts sting in the Hornets

By Karl Petraraja
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The future of the Charlotte Hornets have taken a tough turn.

With the acquisition of Anthony Mason from the New York Knicks, Charlotte is saying good-bye to soft and hello to tough.

The 6-7, 250-pound Mason adds a defensive presence the Hornets have rarely had, especially after the trade of center Alonzo Mourning last season. Mason comes with an attitude - an attitude for winning.

"A lot of people mistake my attitude for winning as being a bad attitude, but all I want to do is win," Mason said in his first Charlotte appearance last week. "It's different when you get beat on the court because the team is better, but it's different when you just throw a game away. I felt at times (in New York) that we just gave some opponents away and I addressed that. I think as a grown man in my profession you should be able to say what you feel like without it being mistaken as a bad attitude."

When the trade first came down, Mason spoke out against coming to Charlotte, shocked that the Knicks would deal him after telling him that he would be part of their foundation. Now, he's happy to be a Hornet.

"At first it was like an insult, but then I thought about it," he said. "You're going somewhere where the community loves basketball and where they wanted me 100 percent, so I feel good about that. I also felt there was a lot of talent on this team that can be built on."

Hornets owner George Shinn, who has taken flak from fans for signing former Larry Johnson to an \$84 million deal before shipping him to New York in exchange for Mason, said the former Tennessee State star represents a change in the team's attitude.

"Our fans have been asking

See MASON on page 11B