



Not quite yet ready
Forget Kerry Collins' boast that the Carolina Panthers were a dynasty in the making. San Francisco still rules. Page 4B.



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Country Day running backs Fred Staton and Ward Gibson lead the Bucs into the N.C. independent schools championship.

Working wage is Two Bucs

By Karl Petraroja
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Call it an embarrassment of riches.

Charlotte Country Day has not one, but two, of Mecklenburg's best running back tandems in senior Ward Gibson and sophomore Fred Staton. And the Buccaneers make sure each gets his hands on the ball.

Two great running backs on one team is a rarity but Bucs head coach Bob Witman isn't about to complain.

"We're a little different," he said. "We're fortunate to have two outstanding backs. Ward is a shifty, quick runner, he can make them miss and he's pretty stout and strong."

"Fred is a fast, straight-ahead type runner. He's also a dangerous receiver. We'll throw to him out of the backfield a few times a game."

Gibson and Staton have helped the Bucs to a perfect 11-0 record, including last Friday's 49-6 victory over Asheville School, in the independent schools state semifinals. The Bucs captured their third straight CISAA championship two weeks ago with a 28-7 victory over Charlotte Latin. The Hawks beat Providence Day 35-14 last week and will square off with the Bucs tomorrow night for the second straight year for the state championship. The game leaves Charlotte Latin with the unenviable task of trying to stop the Bucs dynamic backfield duo.

"If you focus on me, Ward will kill you and if you focus on Ward, I will kill you," Staton said.

Staton, who won two sprint gold medals at the AAU Junior Olympics this summer, has battled ankle problems all year but still put up impressive numbers, 807 yards rushing and 16 touchdowns, including 119 yards and three touchdowns in the win over Latin.

"It's hard for teams to key on either one of us because whenever they see one of us, they're seeing both of us," Gibson said. Gibson's numbers have been even better - 16 touchdowns and 1,123 yards rushing.

"We're so different yet we can be so effective. It's really tough for people to pick who they want to focus on because either one of us can do damage."

It's a kind of pick your own poison situation for opposing teams. Who do they want the Bucs to beat them with?

It's a question opposing teams almost didn't have to worry about, since Gibson and Staton weren't exactly running backs at first sight. The 5-5, 170-pound Gibson, who calls himself "a lifer" at Country Day, has been going to the school since kindergarten. He didn't pick up football until the ninth grade.

"I was actually afraid, being small I didn't want anything to do with it," Gibson said. "I'd go to the

See BUCS on page 4B

CAROLINAS FOOTBALL CLASSIC

Big men on campus



PHOTO/WADE NASH

S.C. State guard Jerrell Moore is a force on the offensive line and the classroom. The senior English major has a 3.4 grade point average and has won several academic honors.

Moore balances books, blocking

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Jerrell Moore isn't the stereotypical student-athlete.

That's because he really is a student first and an athlete second.

"I always felt I'm a student trying to be a football player," said the S.C. State guard.

Moore is a dominant blocker on arguably the best offensive line in black college football. Just as impressive, though, are

his academic credentials: the English major has a 3.4 grade point average, was a Presidential Scholar, MEAC all-academic selection and Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports Scholar. "That's the main reason why I'm here," he said. "I'm using football to fulfill a dream while chasing the goal - get a college degree."

Moore, who is 6-2, 330 pounds, is the latest in a long line of Bulldog linemen with the potential to play in the

NFL. But he's concentrating on life beyond football, an eventuality that has swallowed up the dreams of more gifted athletes.

"I know athletics won't last a lifetime," Moore said.

See MOORE on page 3B



Moore



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Troy Pelshak sees a lot of action as opponents run at the N.C. A&T defensive end. But he takes that as a challenge to be a bookend to line mate Chris McNeil.

Pelshak's a line stalker for Aggies

N.C. A&T defensive end is tough on opposing blockers

By Wade Nash
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

GREENSBORO - Running away from N.C. A&T all-star defensive end Chris McNeil doesn't work very well for Aggies opponents.

That's because they're running at his partner, Troy Pelshak.

The bookends are part of the reason A&T has one of the nation's leading pass defenses and serious candidates for the NFL Draft next spring.

"Troy and Chris really compliment each other," Aggies coach Bill Hayes said. "They're both strong, quick, aggressive and despite their sack totals, they create excellent opportunities for their teammates. We're really blessed to have the two."

Pelshak's nine sacks and 49 tackles is all the more amazing when you consider how the Charlotte native wound up at A&T. No one at Garinger High didn't think Pelshak would amount to much as a student or athlete, and told him so.

"I don't know why, but my high school coach told me I couldn't make it in college," the junior business major said. "He said I couldn't do the work in the classroom and I wouldn't be able to compete on the field. I'd be better off taking a job flipping hamburgers at a fast food restaurant."

Three years later, Pelshak is on schedule to graduate. Instead of listening to the dire predictions, he turned into a solid student and one of black college football's most feared defenders.

"I used my (Garinger) coach's negative comments to motivate me and my mother's positive influence to get me where I am today," he said. "My mother told me to be patient, take things as they come and be prepared when opportunity knocks."

Pelshak, 6-4, 245, makes the most of his chances to destroy opponents. Because offenses run away from McNeil's side of the field, they have little choice but to take Pelshak on. Their approach is singular, though: both are intent on punishing anyone who wanders into their area.

"Chris and I relish the opportunity to contribute," Pelshak said. "I spent a lot of time in the offseason lifting weights and trying to increase my speed."

See PELSHAK on page 3B

Aggies Hawaii-bound

By Wade Nash
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

GREENSBORO - Chris McNeil and James Clyburn are going to Hawaii after the college football season.

Not for vacation, mind you. They'll be auditioning for pro football scouts.

The N.C. A&T players have landed berths in the Hula Bowl, a postseason all-star game that usually attracts some of the top Division I-A seniors. But before jetting to Honolulu, there's the matter of S.C. State in the Carolinas Football Classic.

"Of course I'm going to the Hula Bowl, but my bowl game is against S.C. State in Ericsson," McNeil, a linebacker from Charlotte, said. "My father, my little girl and all my friends will be able to see me play for the first time and I want to win for myself and them."

"Being selected to the Hula Bowl is a great

honor, but I want to end my career with a win over S.C. State," said Clyburn, a 6-4, 320-pound defensive tackle. "We can match last season's record of 8-3 and we can eliminate some of the pain of earlier losses."

McNeil, an N.C. State transfer, led the nation with 21.5 sacks and had 42 tackles going into last week's game at Grambling State, while Clyburn had 27. The Aggies will need that production against a S.C. State team that averaged more than 400 yards rushing in the last four meetings with A&T. Last season the Aggies went into the Carolinas Classic a heavy favorite but left a 35-0 loser after S.C. State tailback Kenny Bynum ran for a school-record 307 yards.

"We've put their last two tailbacks, Michael Hicks and Kenny Bynum, in the pros," Clyburn said. "The last two years, we've played slants and other defenses that their backs did a great job of reading blocks with

See AGGIES on page 3B



PHOTO/WADE NASH

N.C. A&T linebacker Chris McNeil is the nation's leader in quarterback sacks with 21.5. The Charlotte native also leads the Aggies in intensity, according to coach Bill Hayes.



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Defensive tackle James Clyburn, known as "House" to his teammates, is an immovable force in the center of A&T's defensive line. He's been invited to the Hula Bowl.