

B SECTION

SPORTS



All-American guy
N.C. A&T defensive end
Chris McNeil is named to
Division I-AA All-America
team. Page 2B.

Unbeaten Bulls try to stay on roll

Johnson C. Smith puts No. 19 ranking on line in Marriott Classic

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

It's been a long time since Johnson C. Smith basketball has been in such rarefied territory.

First, the Golden Bulls are ranked No. 19 in the nation, the first time since 1993 that Smith has been among the elite. And they will start 1998 unbeaten at 8-0, the first time that's happened in coach Steve Joyner's 11 seasons. Flashy numbers aside, the Bulls' most important battle will be focusing on what got them there.

"That's the test," Joyner said. "We think we certainly know people are going to pay attention to that 8-0 record because we're not going to slip up on anybody."

Smith will find out if anyone's paying attention at the Marriott Classic at Queens, where the

Bulls face USC Spartanburg (5-1) Friday at 8 p.m. The host Royals have won four of the last six classics and will play Montreat (4-7) at 6 p.m. Mars Hill (5-2) plays St. Andrews (2-2) at 4 p.m. and Spring Hill (Ala., 7-1) takes on Wingate (5-3) at 2.

Although none of Smith's current players have played USCS before, Joyner reminded them of the schools' only previous meeting, in the 1991 NCAA playoffs. Smith jumped out to a big lead on its home court, then were blown out by the Rifles and all-America forward Ulysses Hackett.

"We recall that game vividly, and we shared that with our players," Joyner said. "We remember Ulysses S. Hackett. If it weren't for USC Spartanburg, we could've gone to the championship of the regional instead of the consolation game."

Smith, which hasn't recorded a winning season since 1994-95, leads the CIAA in field goal shooting, converting 50.2 percent from the floor, and ranks third in scoring offense with an average of 81.5 points a game. Although the Bulls weren't picked to be among the league's elite this season, Joyner said he expected them to get off to a good start.

"We had said at the very worst we wanted to be 6-2," he said. "It's good for the program, it's good for our players and our attitude as a whole. It's good for everybody."

Senior guard Marquis Wright continues to set the pace for the Bulls, averaging a league-leading 21.4 points per game on 53.9 percent shooting. He also leads the team in assists with 5.63, but Wright isn't the only backcourt star. Junior guard Chris Reese compliments Wright with 17

points per game and give the Bulls one of the CIAA's top backcourts.

"Getting Marquis at (point guard) and Chris settling at (shooting guard) has helped us," Joyner said.

Small forward Ahmed Evans is sixth in the CIAA in field goal percentage with 61.7 percent and tops in three-point shooting at 53.3. Freshman center T.J. Shingler has made an immediate impact in the pivot, hauling down 10.3 rebounds a game while converting 58.1 percent of his shots. With Wright, Smith's only senior, providing leadership and points, the underclassmen have responded in every game.

"If we've made any improvements by leaps and bounds, it's been our chemistry and attitude," Joyner said. "These guys get See BULLS on page 3B



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Johnson C. Smith coach Steve Joyner has led the Golden Bulls to a No. 19 national ranking, their first in four seasons.



PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Senior point guard Marquis Wright leads Smith in scoring and assists. His 21.4 points average leads the CIAA.

Broncos, Chiefs very familiar

By Doug Tucker
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Denver Broncos and Kansas City Chiefs are playoff strangers, but Marty Schottenheimer and John Elway know each other very, very well.

Although the franchises have played 75 times since becoming charter members of the American Football League, the AFC West rivals will be meeting in the post-season for the first time Sunday.

But the playoff dramas of the Kansas City coach and Denver quarterback are part of NFL lore.

Denver fans will forever remember The Drive, when Elway engineered a 98-yard march to force overtime and beat Schottenheimer's Cleveland team 23-20 in the AFC championship game in 1987.

The following year, there came The Fumble. Cleveland's Earnest Byner dropped the ball as he was about to cross the goal line and Denver held on to win 38-33, once more denying Schottenheimer a trip to the Super Bowl.

"I think John has a little Marty Schottenheimer doll he sticks pins into," the coach remarked shortly after taking over the Chiefs in 1989. "If I had all the playoff money that that guy has taken out of my pocket, I'd be a rich man."

Since joining the Chiefs, Schottenheimer is 8-10 against the Broncos, including a couple of times when he turned the tables with Elway-like comebacks.

In 1994, Joe Montana's last-second TD pass lifted the Chiefs to a 31-28 victory in Mile High Stadium.

The last time the teams played, the game proved pivotal to the Chiefs' winning the AFC West and home-field advantage for the playoffs. Kansas City's Pete Stoyanovich connected on a 54-yard field goal as time expired for a 24-22 victory Nov. 16.

It stunned the Broncos because Elway just minutes earlier had driven Denver into position for Jason Elam's go-ahead field goal. It turned out to be the first game in the momentum-building six-game winning streak that the Chiefs now take into the playoffs.

"Had we not won the game, we'd be looking at this thing in a totally different perspective," Schottenheimer said Sunday. "We probably would have played this weekend," instead of having a first-round bye.

The Chiefs' advantage in playing at noisy Arrowhead Stadium, however, could be matched by Elway's vast playoff experience and the fact that Kansas City's See OLD on page 3B

The case for No. 1



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Southern linebacker Endrick Claiborne hauls down S.C. State quarterback Reggie Curry for a sack in the Jaguars' 34-28 Heritage Bowl win Saturday in Atlanta. Southern, which finished its season 11-1, laid its claim to the top historically black football team in the country, but the Jaguars will have to leapfrog 10-2 Hampton, the MEAC regular season champion and a participant in the NCAA Division I-AA playoffs.

Southern, Hampton vie for top black college ranking

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

ATLANTA — So who is the best team in black college football? Southern laid claim to the title Saturday with a 34-28 come-from-behind win over S.C. State in the McDonald's Heritage Bowl, but the Jaguars aren't alone.

Hampton and Florida A&M, which finished first and second in the MEAC and made the NCAA Division I-AA playoffs, can also make a pitch for the top spot. So could Jackson State, the SWAC runner-up and a playoff bid. Southern, the SWAC champion and 11-1, wasn't eligible for the post-season tournament because the annual Bayou Classic game with rival Grambling conflicts with the first round.

"You look at our football team, but all you can do is be 12-0," to guarantee a national championship Southern coach Pete Richardson said. "They know that on any given day, any team can beat you, so you have to be consistent."

The results will come in this week. Black College Sports Page crowned Hampton No. 1, with the final Sheridan Poll expected

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PHOTO/WADE NASH

S.C. State running back Chad Eddy (right) is congratulated by receiver Chris Russ after a second-quarter touchdown

After a long hiatus, Lakers and Boston renew rivalry

By John Nadel
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — It was like old times — the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics going at each other before a sellout crowd, and the outcome in doubt until the final seconds.

It hasn't been a big deal when the teams have met in recent

years, because neither has won a championship since the Lakers did it in 1988, and the Celtics haven't advanced past the second round of the playoffs since that same year.

The way things have gone for the Celtics the past few seasons, it appeared a game like the one played Sunday night at the

Forum was a long way off.

But enter Rick Pitino, a couple of good rookies and some talented newcomers, and the Celtics soon might be back among the NBA's elite.

"This was a big win for us because they are playing so well, and they are the Lakers," Antoine Walker said, after getting 28

points and 13 rebounds in leading the Celtics to a surprising 108-102 victory before a raucous crowd of 17,505 at the Forum.

"Something that we're trying to do is rebuild this rivalry," Walker said after the Celtics handed the Lakers only their second loss in 13 games at home this season. "We are rebuilding this organiza-

tion, and we are getting better."

The game was played 18 years to the day after former Lakers star Magic Johnson and one-time Celtics great Larry Bird first opposed each other in a regular-season game.

The teams dominated the 1980s, with the Lakers winning See LAKERS on page 4B