

## Subs key to regular-season finale

Continued from page 1C  
kind of hard to say," he said. "The rotation has been kind of set, and if it's not broke, don't fix it. The guys have been playing well all year long and made plays all year long, so it's kind of hard to

justify me seeing time right now. But if my number's called, I'll make the most of it."

It's taken a while for Minter to look forward to the playoffs. As the second-

longest tenured Panther, the seven-year veteran has seen every low point in franchise history. For once, things have gone right.

"It's something real special to get to 10 wins," Minter

said. "It's the first time we've been to 10 wins since I've been here. It's great for the organization, the ownership, the coaches, the players that have been through everything we've been through in Carolina."

## JCSU gets reinforcements for January

Continued from page 1C  
concerns us is just being consistent in attitude throughout the game."

Another plus for Smith has been senior center Willie Martin's return to the lineup from a knee injury. With Martin and Fulton sharing the rebounding, the Bulls

have been more consistent on defense and getting into transition. He also provides direction for the younger players.

"Willie is our leader and we're looking for senior leadership," Joyner said. "We're still looking for that emotional leader. We're struggling

emotionally because we've been so up and down."

With help on the way and the season's first stretch of positive results, Smith is in position to put those difficult early-season missteps behind. With the meat of the CIAA season 11 days away, Smith can't afford to do any-

thing else.

"Tough times don't last forever; tough teams do," Joyner said. "We're certainly going to have to play stronger as we move further into CIAA play. I think if this team continues to work systematically, we're going to be OK."

## Serena withdraws from opening event

Continued from page 1C

ration for the Australian Open, which starts Jan. 19.

Williams had agreed to partner with James Blake at the Hopman Cup to defend the title the pair won last year.

McNamee said Lindsay Davenport would replace Williams in the United States team.

"Serena regrets not being able to come back and defend her title, but we have a wonderful replacement in Lindsay Davenport," McNamee said.

Williams had a 38-3 record in 2003 and won

the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles. She was a semifinalist at the French Open, then missed the U.S. Open after having surgery on her left knee.

Her sister Venus has also not played since losing the Wimbledon final.

Venus strained an abdominal muscle in late April. The injury flared up in the Wimbledon semifinals, and she was in obvious pain playing her sister in the final.

She said last month she was on course to play a tuneup event before the Australian Open.

## Black NFL players threatened over relationships with white women

Continued from page 1C

"I'm not worried about it," Mitchell told The Associated Press. "It's not a threat to me at all. I don't live in fear. I just go out and live day to day."

Mitchell, 25, is in his third season with the Eagles.

The NFL security department believes one person is responsible for the crime, although letters have been postmarked from Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio, along with Erie and New Castle, Pa. The FBI is studying clues from the production and the content of the mail.

"We believed they were typed on a computer and copied on a fax machine," Hawk told The Philadelphia Tribune. "There is no handwriting or signature on the 15 letters we have in our lab.

They are being tested for DNA right now. All the typing, the phrasing, the language and the paragraphing are the same. So the best guess is that we're dealing with one person."

Hawk said the Cleveland office assigned one case agent and a squad to the investigation.

The NFL sent a memo Nov. 18 to all teams, warning them that threats had been mailed to African-American athletes in the past year.

"Unfortunately, these kinds of things happen," said Anthony Buchanico, director of security for the Eagles. "We take them seriously. The NFL has known about this for a long time."

Linebackers Carlos Emmons and Ike Reese, who are black, said they threw the memo away and didn't

think about it again. According to a published report, Reese said: "People have nothing better to do with their time. They want you to give them some attention and put you on guard."

Defensive back Troy Vincent said threatening mail has been going on for many years in sports, not just the NFL. "It exists everywhere," Vincent said. "Our country is very divided."

The Miami Herald reported that Dolphins defensive end Jason Taylor was one of the targeted players. Taylor is married to a white woman, and so is his father.

"I have no idea why that would bother anybody," Hawk said. "I guess we're dealing with someone who's out of step with society."

## Rangers owner sets Tuesday as A-Rod trade deadline

By Stephen Hawkins  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Texas owner Tom Hicks set a Tuesday deadline for a trade of Alex Rodriguez to Boston, saying the MVP shortstop will remain with the Rangers if a deal isn't completed by then.

Hicks set a deadline of 5 p.m. EST Tuesday. Hicks told general manager John Hart to build toward next season with Rodriguez in his plans if a trade doesn't happen by then.

"This potential trade is very complicated and involves multiple parties," Hicks wrote in an e-mail to The Associated Press on Sunday night. "From the Texas Rangers' perspective, we need finality so we can proceed with our off-season plans."

Hicks wrote that the Tuesday deadline "is a reasonable timeframe for the various groups to make their decisions."

Red Sox owner John Henry, and team president Larry Lucchino, who last week declared the deal "dead," didn't immediately respond to e-mails or phone calls. General manager Theo Epstein also didn't return messages.

Scott Boras, Rodriguez's agent, said Hicks called him Sunday to inform him of the deadline for the trade, which would send outfielder Manny Ramirez to Texas.

Rodriguez's \$252 million, 10-year contract

has seven years and \$179 million remaining. During negotiations last week, the players' association said the agreement could be restructured but not reduced, and rejected Boston's proposal, which the union said would cut \$28 million to \$30 million.

Instead, the union said it would approve a change that would lower Rodriguez's contract by \$12 million to \$13 million in exchange for him getting the right to use Boston's logo and trademarks in marketing deals. In addition, he would be able to become a free agent after the 2005 season.

"The parties have \$13 million from Alex that they know they have to work with. They didn't know that before last week. That should be a real benefit," Boras said. "I think we've done our work being able to define exactly what restructuring means for Alex and the Boston Red Sox."

Lucchino proclaimed the trade "dead" Thursday, blaming the players' association for not approving the steeper reduction. Texas also blamed the union, but Hart wasn't prepared to say talks were over.

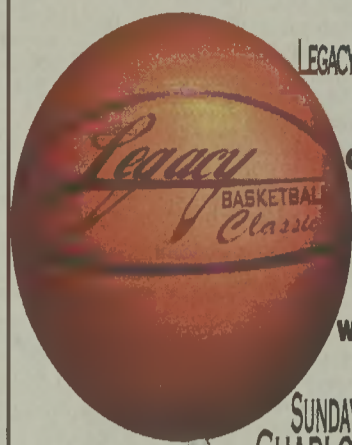
Ramirez is baseball's only other \$20 million-a-year player, and his \$160 million, eight-year contract has five years and \$97.5 million remaining. If the deal goes through, the Red Sox presumably would then trade longtime shortstop Nomar Garciaparra, possibly to the Chicago White Sox.

The proposed trade, which would be the first time a reigning MVP has switched teams, has been discussed for several weeks.

Please see RANGER/3C

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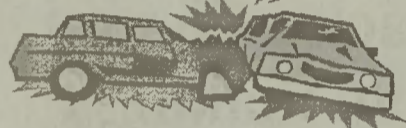
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