

Black College Sports/4C
 B. J. JONES
 CHARLOTTE, NC 28216

Bonds: I'll ignore all off-field distractions

By Janie McCauley
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — A winter without his father beside him in the batting cage weighed more heavily on Barry Bonds' mind this offseason than his connection to a lab at the center of an alleged steroid ring.

"It's been difficult," the slugger said Monday, sitting in the dugout at soggy Scottsdale Stadium. "Just hard all the way around. I broke down a couple times in the batting cage just due to the fact he wasn't with me. He's been my coach my whole life."

Bonds was surrounded by reporters on his first day at spring training, and he was asked repeatedly about his ties to the supplements lab accused of illegally distributing steroids to dozens of athletes. The six-time National League MVP, who appeared in December before a grand jury probing the lab, had repeatedly denied using steroids.

"They can test me every day if they choose to," said Bonds, who is right around his 228-pound playing weight.

After last season, Bonds seriously considered walking away from baseball for good, unable to imagine playing without his dad. Bobby, who had been ill for nearly a year with lung cancer and a brain tumor, died in August at age 57.

But the Giants slugger pushed on, at the urging of his mother, his wife and godfather Willie Mays.

"I couldn't hit. I didn't want to go in the cage. I didn't want to swing the bat," Bonds said. "I really didn't want any part of it for a while."

Now, another important member of Bonds' supporting cast, trainer Greg Anderson, won't be around. Anderson was absent Monday when Bonds showed up for camp a day ahead of the voluntary reporting date for position players.

Anderson, often seen with Bonds at spring training and during the season, was among four men charged this month in an alleged steroid-distribution ring that federal prosecutors say supplied professional athletes with banned substances. All the men have pleaded innocent and no athletes have been charged.

"I feel bad for him," said Bonds, who turns 40 this summer. "I feel sad. We grew up together. We're friends. It's unfortunate what he's having to go through."

About BALCO, the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative that's at the center of the federal steroids case, Bonds said: "There's nothing I can do about it right now. I have to go out and play baseball and, hopefully, it will blow over. ..."

"I believe if I wasn't going for records, it would be a lullified situation," said Bonds, who is two home runs shy of tying Mays for third on the career list with 660. "If you want to be at the top, you've got to have broad shoulders. ... I know who I am. I know what I stand for. I know what kind of

Please see BONDS/2C



Carolina Cobras receiver/defensive back Damien Groce breaks into the clear during a kickoff return for a touchdown in a 45-38 loss to Arizona, Carolina's ninth straight in Charlotte.

PHOTO/WADE NASH

Cobras look to strike for first Charlotte win

By Herbert L. White
 herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

The Carolina Cobras have another chance to win their first game in Charlotte.

The Cobras, who lost their Charlotte Coliseum opener 45-38 last week to Arizona, will try to rebound Saturday against Orlando. Game time is 7:30 p.m. After opening with a pair of road wins, extending the home losing streak to nine games was a downer.

"It kind of hurts," said receiver/defensive back Damien Groce, who had two touchdown catches against Arizona. "That's our main goal - to turn this thing around and especially do it for Charlotte. The bad thing about it is we didn't come through for them, so we'll come back ...and try it again."

Carolina, which didn't have a turnover in two wins, had three against the Rattlers, who won for the first time this season. Quarterback Matt Nagy, who had been near-

ly flawless, threw two interceptions, including one on the Cobras' final drive. The Rattlers had a hand in those miscues by putting pressure on Nagy.

"Quarterbacks are not unlike baseball pitchers when you think about it," Khayat said. "You don't see Roger Clemens go 30-0 very often, or 30-2, but usually when we have throws go awry, it's because of some pressure or good play by the defense. There's more to it than the guy under the center."

The defense did its part by holding Arizona on a couple of possessions and recovering a Rattlers fumble to set Carolina up for a tying score with less than a minute to play. But a Nagy interception ended any hope to extend the game or win with a touchdown and two-point conversion.

"We had our chances and we had several chances that the defense go for us," Cobras coach Eddie Khayat said. "I thought we were

Please see COBRAS/2C



C. JEMAL HORTON

It's not heavy, just a mess

I'm mad today, y'all. Here are 10 things I truly HATE about the sports world:

10) I hate that George Foreman hasn't looked at his old rival, Muhammad Ali, and taken the hint. Foreman should stay retired - period.

Foreman's still witty. He's got control his faculties. Too many punches clearly have taken their toll on Ali and Ken Norton. It would be a travesty if Foreman were next. And at age 55, the chances of it happening are too great.

9) I hate that ESPN anchor Stuart Scott still insists on being a walking stereotype. Scott uses more "phat" and "bomb-diggity," references than the average rapper from the 1980s.

Scott's hip-hop one-liners just seem forced, almost to the point of patronizing. The sad part is, Scott really is the most astute, diverse, engaging anchors at ESPN. Hopefully, he'll get a chance to show that again.

8) I hate that Temple coach John Chaney's 700th career victory got so little fanfare.

7) I hate that people keep saying that sitting out a year has made former Ohio State running back Maurice Clarett too rusty and out of shape, thus meaning NFL teams shouldn't risk drafting him before the second round this spring.

Such foolishness especially bothers me since former Michigan quarterback Drew Henson has missed three years of football while pursuing professional baseball, yet the "experts" say he's a top-five-caliber player.

And then there's former Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch, who quit football and hasn't played in a game since he won the Heisman Trophy in 2001. Yet Crouch reportedly is getting a shot with Green Bay as a defensive back, a position he has never played.

Now, you tell me who's a rusty risk - Clarett, or two guys who've sat out a combined five years? Something tells me this is about Clarett challenging - and defeating - the ridiculous rule that kept underclassmen from entering the NFL draft.

6) I hate that former Baylor basketball player Patrick Dennehy is not here to celebrate March Madness.

5) I hate that the North Carolina players, especially Rashad McCants, are still being blamed for the team's problems. Coach Roy Williams clearly has played a part - the biggest? - in the Tar Heels losing two huge leads to Florida State and getting beat at Clemson. It's time to stop blaming the players in Chapel Hill.

4) I hate that black-college football has lost its most high-profile coach in Doug Williams, who left Grambling for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' front office.

3) I hate that people are leaving out the word "alleged" when referring to the woman accusing Kobe Bryant of rape as "the victim."

Please see THINGS/2C

Best in class

Garinger High (top) and Vance High celebrated girls' basketball championships last week at Cricket Arena. Garinger earned its first girls title ever when the Wildcats beat South Mecklenburg 54-51 for the Southwestern 4A championship. Vance, which finished second in the N.C. 4A tournament last year, won the ME-CA 8 title with a victory over West Charlotte. Both Vance and Garinger earned first-round byes.



PHOTOS/WADE NASH

Bobcats sponsor top equestrians

By Herbert L. White
 herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Some of the world's best equestrians are coming to Charlotte.

The inaugural Charlotte Jumper Classic will held April 9-11 at the Charlotte Coliseum. The event was announced last week by Bob Johnson, owner of the NBA Charlotte Bobcats.

Proceeds will benefit the Charlotte Bobcats Charitable Fund, the organization's philanthropic division.

With a total purse of \$260,000, the Charlotte Classic will be one of the top events of the American

Please see BOBCATS/2C



Johnson