

# Cobras try for home win

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very fortunate when we recovered that fumble on the toss that was what would give us the ball game, but it didn't work out that way."

But after going 0-16 in its first season in Charlotte, the Cobras are vastly improved with new players like Groce, who played with Nagy with the New York Dragons

before signing with Carolina.

"We all work together and we want to do something together and turn this thing around," Groce said. "We know the outcome if we do, so it's like an opportunity for everybody."

The Cobras need to convert those opportunities into points Saturday as well as stop the Predators and quar-

terback Jay Gruden.

Although the Arena Football League is built for scoring, defensive stops win games.

"We want to score points, but we've also got to play defense, too," Groce said. "This is an offensive game, but defense wins championships, and that's coming from me, an offensive player."

## Things I hate about sports

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2) I hate that the great John McLendon is not around to enjoy another CIAA tournament. McLendon, who died in 1999, was co-founder of the tournament, and the event truly was his passion.

People travel from all over the country and, in some cases, the world to get to the CIAA. And McLendon, the former N.C. Central coach and creator of the Four Corners offense, is one of the biggest reasons.

1) I hate that Charlotte Bobcats owner Bob Johnson isn't getting enough credit for bringing a horse show-jumping competition to town on Easter weekend. This competition is a blessing to Charlotte's black youth.

I'm serious.

Too many black children who follow sports are preoccupied with basketball, baseball and football, when there are plenty of other alter-

natives out there. Venus and Serena Williams' parents recognized that, and they became tennis stars. Fred Whitfield's mother recognized that, and right now he's the best calf roping in the world. And then there's Tiger Woods.

Granted, it costs a lot more to buy a horse and drive around the country competing in equestrian events than it does to buy a pair of Air Jordans and go to a basketball court. But competition isn't the only option. Being around the animals is a good cultural experience, and it can lead to careers in veterinary medicine, horse training, and beyond.

Hopefully, as many children as possible will get to Johnson's competition. Shoot, many of the adults need that exposure, too.

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## Bonds looks forward to baseball

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ballplayer I am."

Bonds spent two stints on the bereavement list in 2003 and, despite all he was dealing with, still batted .341 with 45 homers and 90 RBIs.

When asked if he can pass Hank Aaron's record of 755 homers, Bonds quickly answered: "I think I can do anything. ... I'm going for it all."

Mays spent three days a week with Bonds the entire offseason, working with him on his swing while also monitoring Bonds' mental frame of mind.

"I'm focused now, and ready," Bonds said.

He admitted, with a smile, that he wants to pass Mays on the homers list as soon as possible. He just wishes his father could be there to see it.

While the Giants have indicated they will be better about enforcing a two-year-old directive by the commissioner's office that limits who can enter the clubhouse,

Bonds thinks his other trainer, Harvey Shields, will still be around. Shields stretches out Bonds before games.

"I believe Harvey will always be with me," Bonds said. "That's stretching. I have to get ready for games. People have to realize our body is our machine."

According to documents released last week, Anderson told federal agents he gave steroids to several professional baseball players. It was unclear whether Anderson provided specific names to the agents.

Manager Felipe Alou is convinced Bonds will deal with everything just fine.

"He lost his father and he still won the MVP," Alou said. "Barry Bonds is a baseball player, maybe one of the best baseball players that ever lived. To be a baseball player of that caliber, you have to be the complete package."

In nearby Mesa on Monday, Chicago Cubs manager Dusty Baker, formerly

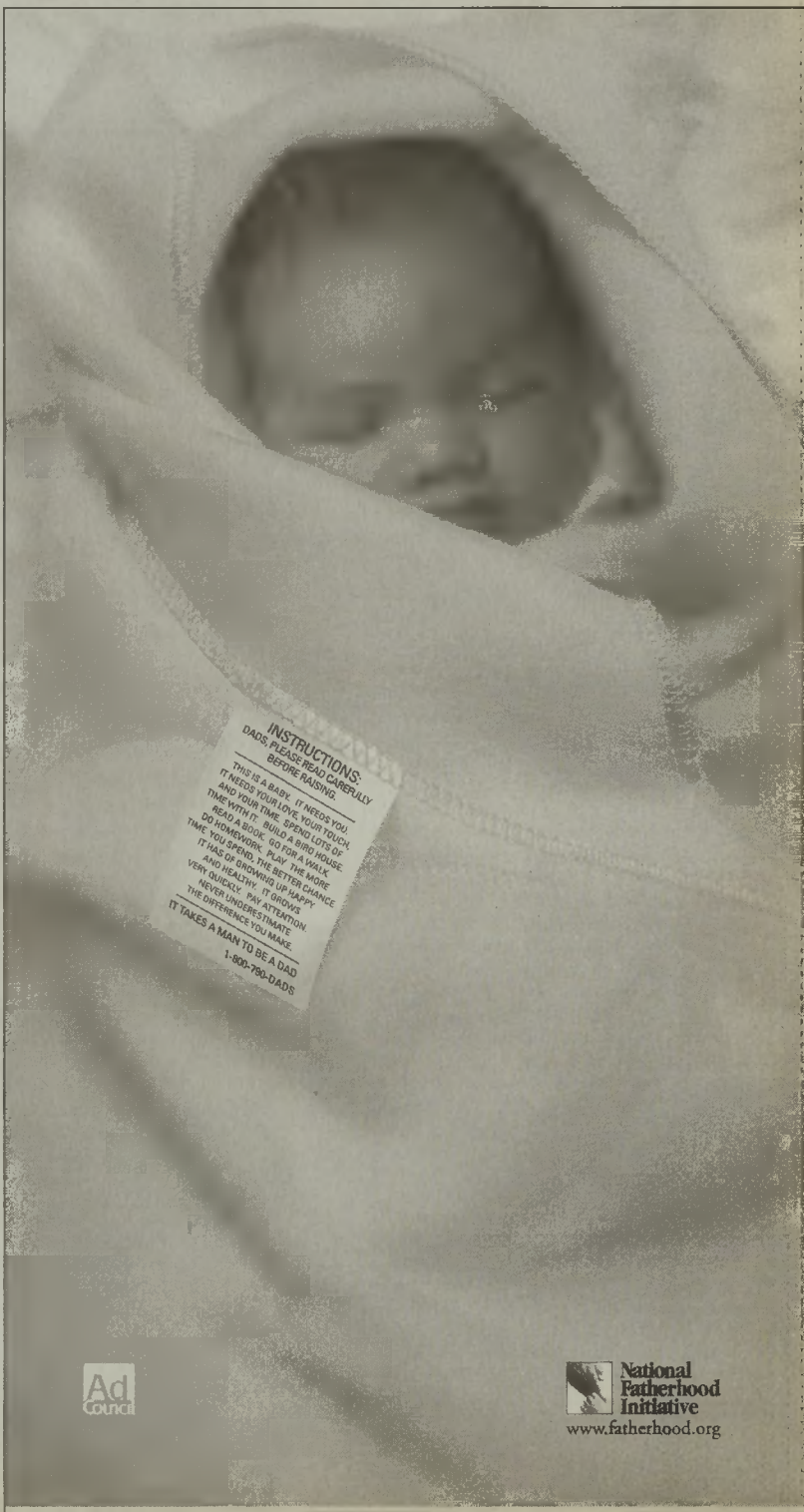
the Giants' skipper, defended Bonds.

"The only thought I have is that a man's innocent until he's proven guilty," Baker said.

Bonds seems to have a knack for blocking out the distractions.

"Regardless of what my problems are or what situations are at hand, they're still going to be there anyway," he said. "Baseball has been more of a stress release than anything else."

"Baseball has been time away from everything. It's my stage. It's something that I enjoy to do. I enjoy to do it for the fans, I enjoy to do it for the game of baseball and myself. I just really enjoy being on stage."



## Bobcats sponsor equestrian jumpers

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Grand Prix Association. The competition will be made up of 11 elite classes over three days, including the \$150,000 Grand Prix of Charlotte for the Charlotte Bobcats Cup.

"I am extremely pleased to introduce the Charlotte Jumper Classic to the Queen City," Johnson said in a statement. "Bringing new events to Charlotte is part of our community compact and I am confident that this first-class sporting competition will become one of the region's annual signature events."

"Horse show jumping is a passion of mine, combining world-class athletes with an engaging entertainment experience. I am also excited to be able to make the Jumper Classic a key component of our organization's mission to help the children of Charlotte through our new Bobcats Charitable Fund."

The Jumper Classic will feature many of the nation's best riders, including contestants who will participate in the FEI World Cup in Milan, Italy, from April 21-25 and the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece in August. Competitors will perform in front of the selection committee that determines the United States Olympic Team.

"The Charlotte Jumper Classic is a great addition to the American Grand Prix Association Series of Show Jumping. The location of this event along with the prize money will make the Charlotte Jumper Classic a major stop on the American Show Jumping tour," said Gene Mische, president of Stadium Jumping Inc. "In this Olympic year, an event of this magnitude will provide the United States Equestrian Team Selection Committee another opportunity to look at horses and riders who will audition for the United States team that will compete in Athens."

Tickets can be purchased by calling Ticketmaster at (704) 522-6500, logging onto [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) or in person at the Charlotte Coliseum box office from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tickets can be purchased in a five-show package from \$55 - \$220 or on a single-show basis from \$15-\$50. Everyone attending the Friday matinee will receive a \$5 discount and groups of 15 or more can receive a \$3 discount off price level three tickets. The Coliseum will seat 14,000 spectators for each session, all on the lower level.

Rider entries will be accepted through March 6. Anyone who wants to register should call Stadium Jumping at (800) 237-8924 or log on to [www.stadiumjumping.com](http://www.stadiumjumping.com).

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