

Gregory takes Cobras' top job

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game losing streak. But four straight games, including three home games, sealed his fate. Carolina has lost 11 straight home games in Charlotte since moving from Raleigh in 2002.

"I appreciate being given the opportunity to be a member of the Carolina Cobras organization and to play a part in building what I believe will be a winning team," said Khayat.

A two-time AFL Coach of the Year, Gregory guided the New York Dragons/Iowa Barnstormers franchise to two ArenaBowl berths and four division titles from 1995 to 2003. He currently ranks among the all-time coaching leaders in AFL history with 72 career wins (sixth), 126 games coached (fifth) and six postseason victories (fifth). Gregory's teams have qualified for the playoffs on six occasions and advanced to

the ArenaBowl in 1996 and 1997.

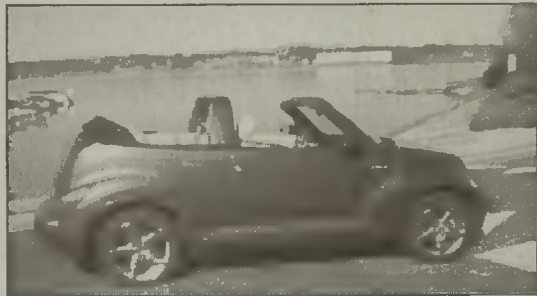
"I have the highest regards for Eddie Khayat and he has certainly been a first-class person," Gregory said. "Having said that, I am going to do the absolute best for this football organization. I look forward to showing the fans of Charlotte what kind of team we can be."

Over his nine-year head coaching career, Gregory's offenses have averaged 52.8

points per AFL game. In 2001, Gregory directed the Dragons to a league-record 64.1 points per game, including a 99-point effort against the Cobras.

Gregory spent eight seasons as a head coach in the Canadian Football League, leading the Saskatchewan Roughriders to a Grey Cup title in 1989. He was also head coach for 10 seasons at South Dakota State, where he is second in victories.

Rag-top PT Cruiser a definite step up



PT Cruiser

WINFRED B. CROSS

Test Drive



If it looks like a hot rod, it should drive like one. Right?

Right. That's the problem I've had with Chrysler's cute, but slug-slow PT Cruiser. The look is awesome. The storage space and multi-seating configurations are spectacular. That four banger engine is the pits.

Chrysler took care of the problem last year with a 180-horsepower turbo that gave the little bugger a bit more

attitude.

But that wasn't enough, so the company has chopped the top off the Cruiser to give us driving al fresco. Yep, the PT Cruiser is now a convertible, and a good one at that.

Chrysler looks at the drop top as a new model because it has 57 percent different parts from the hardtop. Maybe so, but one glance tells you this is a PT Cruiser. The new car is striking from the front and side. The view from the rear is a different story. The back is a bit high-hipped and wide, looking more Monique than J-Lo or Beyonce. Still, I give the overall design top marks.

The interior is much like that of the hardtop's except

you notice space isn't as plentiful. That is to be expected. The convertible rides on a shorter wheelbase - coupe-like instead of sedan. There is still room for four adults - even with a tall adult in the front. Also, the rear seats will tumble and fold, giving you more storage space when traveling with two or fewer.

The car's fit and finish is impressive, but my GT had a few problems. The climate control buttons kept falling off into the floor and the top leaked during a rainstorm. I believe my car was a pre-production vehicle so I don't think either of those problems will see the light of day.

The best thing about the GT is the 220-hp turbo engine. It's flexible and gives the convertible its own personality - a slightly wicked one. This is now a hot rod. Not a Porsche or even a 350Z roadster, but something with more bite than a Miata.

The handling isn't as crisp as a Miata, but few cars are blessed with that kind of ability. It's crisp enough to make any driver very, very happy.

There are three flavors: base, touring and GT. Base gives you the unpeppy 150-hp engine. The Touring model has a 180-hp engine. GT gives you 220 horses, a standard five-speed and lots of goodies. My GT with automatic and everything but the navigation system probably will sticker at or above \$30,000. The base starts at about \$25,000.

The PT Cruiser convertible should be hitting showrooms now. If you are looking for wind-in-your-hair (or scalp) fun, you have to consider this car.

Clinton makes JUCO tourney

Clinton Junior College earned a trip to the National Junior Conference Athletic Association tournament.

Clinton (22-9) won the Region X championship earlier this month and advanced to the District III tournament at Allegany College in Cumberland, Md. The Rock Hill school upset No. 20 Aiken Tech 70-67 to get to the district draw and Allegany (28-3), ranked 12th nationally.

Clinton has been on a roll all season. Coach Murray Garvin was named Carolinas Junior College Region X coach of the year and three

players - Pierre Stines, Sammy Monroe and Jonathan Womack - were named to the all-region team. Stines, a 6-6 forward from Danville, Va., was named to the first team, while Monroe, a 6-6 swingman from Goldsboro and Womack, a 6-6 forward and former Garinger High standout, were named to the second team.

Other Charlotte-area players at Clinton include Nick Heath (Victory Christian); J.J. Wilson (Gaston Day) and Wallace Minter (Chester High).

Herbert L. White

Pulling for March surprises

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Xavier by 20 points in the first round of the Atlantic 10 tournament.

Hey, I could understand that argument if Saint Joseph's hadn't gone undefeated during the regular season before their ONE mess-up of the year. Stanford got the No. 1 seed in the Phoenix Region after its one mess-up. Kentucky got the No. 1 seed in the St. Louis Region after FOUR mess-ups. And Duke got the No. 1 seed in the Atlanta Region after FIVE mess-ups - and no ACC Tournament title.

So why not Saint Joseph's? And then there are some who, all season long, have been complaining that Saint Joseph's wouldn't have an undefeated regular-season

record in, say, the ACC.

No kidding? I don't think even Saint Joseph's would argue that. But that's not the point. There are a whole lot of teams would do worse if they played in the ACC.

Seriously, do you think Oklahoma State, a team many say should have been a No. 1 seed ahead of Saint Joseph's, would have taken the ACC? What about Gonzaga, America's Mid-Major Team? Absolutely not.

The bottom line is, when it comes to seeding for the tournament, each team is judged simply on what it did against its competition that season. And the record shows Saint Joseph's dominated its competition.

Why begrudge a team for that?

Again, this is not the BCS

system made infamous by football; a basketball team doesn't get thrust into the national championship game by some clandestine formula that favors one conference over another.

So if Saint Joseph's is to become national champion, it will have to earn the title by winning six games. And they'll all be tough.

Regardless of seeding, that's one heck of a feat. It's just sad that, before the NCAA tournament even began, some people were trying to turn it into the BCS system.

Minus the 'C.'

Go, Saint Joseph's. And, for what it's worth: Go Alabama State.

E-mail columnist C. Jemal Horton at sejemalwrite@aol.com.



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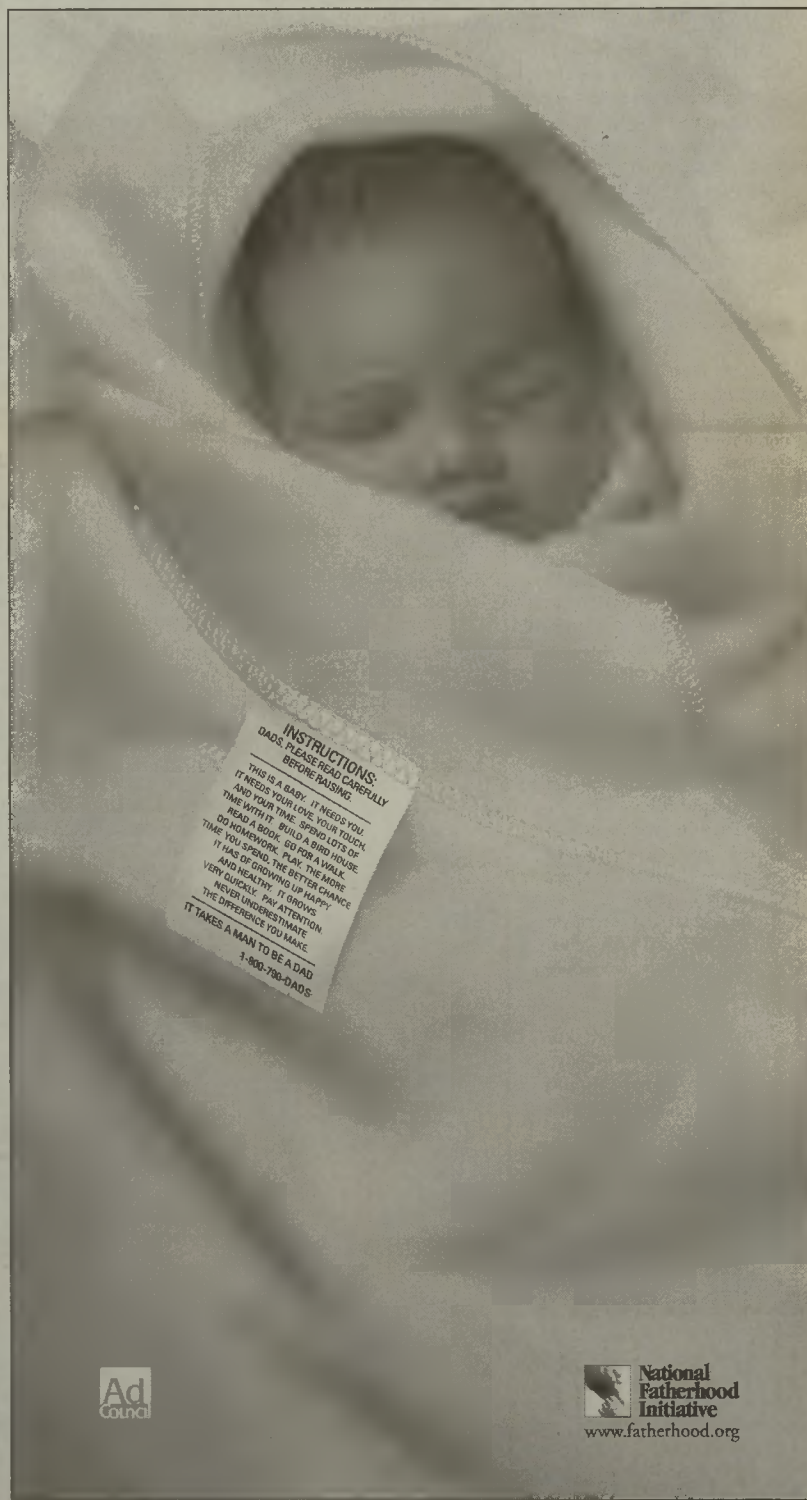
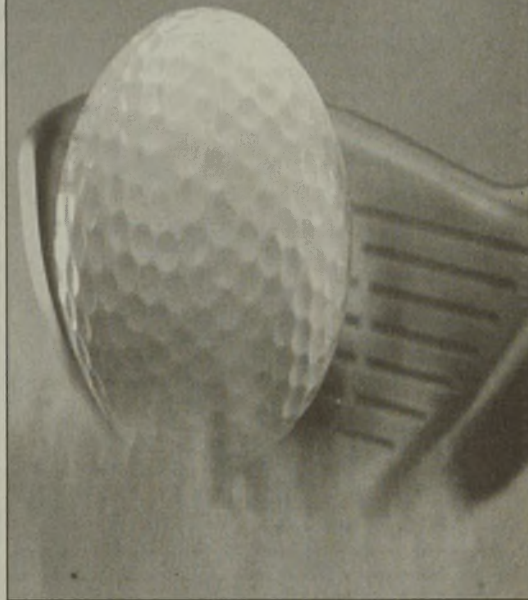
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