



C. JEMAL HORTON

Broaden horizons beyond obvious

NASCAR did a pretty neat thing recently when it tapped Earvin "Magic" Johnson as co-chairman of its newly created Executive Steering Committee for Diversity.

But notice that I didn't say that NASCAR did the right thing.

Again, NASCAR did nothing more than a pretty neat thing by creating its diversity committee, which, among other things, hopes to assist in bringing more African-Americans to the sport.

Before you tear a muscle nodding your head and barking, "It's about time!" consider one important thing: This was not something that NASCAR had to do.

There was no pressure on NASCAR. Shoot, NASCAR is thriving like no other sport in our country right now. It is more popular than ever. It has grown much bigger than the stereotype it used to be - you know, the stereotype that NASCAR was nothing more than some good ol' boys who used to run moonshine but now were happy earning a modest living going in circles?

NASCAR is big business now. Big, successful business.

Those humongous stadiums that seat upward of 150,000 racing fans? They stay filled to capacity - every week. All that racing merchandise you see getting hawked on TV hour after hour? NASCAR can't keep it on the shelves. The league is making money hand over fist.

So, no, a more diverse employee and fan base isn't needed to help NASCAR grow.

But NASCAR created its diversity committee anyway.

That's pretty neat of NASCAR.

So instead of screaming, "It's about time!" maybe some of us need to look in the proverbial mirror.

May I be brutally honest with you all for a moment?

Yes, there definitely are forces beyond the control of black folk keeping us from getting opportunities in life, including the world of sports. But do you really want to know one of the biggest forces holding us back, when it comes to sports?

Ourselves.

At the risk of painting all African-Americans with a broad brush, when it comes to sports, there simply are not enough of us who are willing to expand our horizons beyond the "ball" sports. Specifically, there aren't enough of us willing to expand our horizons past the Big Three - basketball, football and baseball.

Here in North Carolina, there are black people who live 2 miles from the race-track, but won't go to one race. Yet some of these same people will drive to Illinois to take Junior to an AAU basketball tournament.

You don't like racing? Fine. But we at least should be willing to consider sports other than the Big Three.

Example 1: The best player

Please see LOOK/3C

Division II schools look to scrimmage up

By Herbert L. White
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If North Carolina's Division I basketball programs want to line up a preseason game with Johnson C. Smith, Golden Bulls coach Steve Joyner wants to talk.

An NCAA rule prohibiting Division I schools

NCAA prohibition makes preseason games attractive

from playing barnstorming teams of former collegians makes Division II programs more attractive. It's a possibility Joyner finds appealing for

Smith, which has been to the Division II playoffs three of the last four seasons.

"We've always been interested," he said. "But

the mindset is beginning to change with Division I schools playing Division II schools in preseason games. I'm hearing that's beginning to change."

North Carolina started the Division II scrimmaging last year with a preseason game against N.C. Central and is on the

verge of signing a deal to play Winston-Salem State Nov. 5 in Chapel Hill. Winston-Salem is also negotiating to play Wake Forest, another ACC school, Nov. 11 at Joel Coliseum.

"We are close to getting it done, and it's a big deal. Please see JCSU/2C



Joyner

STUMBLING BLOCK



PHOTOS/WAYNE JERNIGAN

Charlotte guard Andrea Stinson will have to figure out how to get past opponents like Indiana's Tamika Catchings during a four-game road trip that starts today in Connecticut.

Inconsistency plagues Sting as road trip looms

By Herbert L. White
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The Sting clearly is in need of focus headed into a four-game road trip.

And a little defense wouldn't hurt, either.

Charlotte, 2-2 after a 63-53 loss to New York Tuesday at Charlotte Coliseum, didn't have much of either, continuing an uneven start to the season. The Sting couldn't find a rhythm on offense and couldn't stop the Liberty, which connected on 52.1 percent of its shots.

"We didn't do a good job with penetration," Charlotte coach Trudi Lacey said. "New York didn't do anything we didn't expect. We just didn't execute. We didn't focus."

Charlotte will need more of that starting today

at Connecticut.

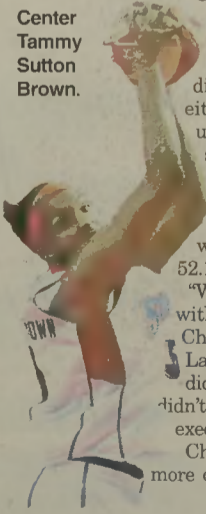
"The biggest thing is consistency," forward Charlotte Smith-Taylor said. "The Indiana game (a win) we played defense to perfection, so we know we can do it."

Charlotte's perimeter defense struggled to contain New York guards Becky Hammon and Vickie Johnson, who combined for 23 points and nine assists. The Sting backcourt of Andrea Stinson and Dawn Staley, meanwhile, mustered just 12 points and three assists, but Lacey suggests Charlotte's problems aren't limited to one area.

"We simply have to bear down and get it done," she said. "We came out and not focused to win. We were not mentally prepared to win."

The four-game swing, which includes stops in Indiana, Los Angeles and Phoenix could become a crucial stretch in Charlotte's season. Coming home with at least a split would go a long way in positioning the Sting atop the Eastern Conference.

"It's definitely a big trip, but we've got to play one game at a time," Smith-Taylor said. "We've shown we can do it, but we've got to be more consistent."



Center Tammy Sutton Brown.

Pistons Rip way into NBA Finals

By Larry Lage
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. - Richard Hamilton was finally guarded by Ron Artest for an entire game.

And it worked - for a quarter.

The Defensive Player of the Year held Hamilton to one point in the first quarter, but Hamilton finished with 21 to lead the Detroit Pistons past Indiana 69-65 Tuesday night in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals.

"Being able to play for a world title is crazy," Hamilton said with a smile he didn't try to hide.

The Pistons will go on the road for Game 1 of the NBA Finals on Sunday night against the Los Angeles Lakers.

"Beat L.A.! Beat L.A.!" the crowd at The Palace chanted following the final buzzer.

After the game, with red, white and blue confetti flickering and fluttering in the air, Hamilton hugged Pacers star Reggie Miller, who was a basketball role model for the shooting guard.

"He just said, 'Keep going,'" Hamilton said. Hamilton never seems to stop, as Artest found out chasing Hamilton as he ran tirelessly all over

Please see PISTONS/3C



Hamilton

Lakers four wins from Mailman's first NBA title

By John Nadel
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - Ankle-deep in a bucket of cold water and ice strapped to his aging knees, Karl Malone finally had a chance to sit back and relax.

Not that he was ready to take advantage of the opportunity. Not yet, anyway.

Malone established himself as the best power forward ever during 18 seasons with the Utah Jazz. But he joined the Los Angeles Lakers last summer to try to win the one prize he lacked - a championship.

So pardon Malone if he's hesitant to get too comfortable even though he helped put the Lakers back in the NBA Finals.

"I've been there twice and I've had to go home with a bad taste in my mouth," Malone said after the Lakers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 96-90 on Monday night to win the Western Conference finals. "I've been here before. I haven't done anything yet."

The finals begin Sunday in Los Angeles, with the Lakers as a seven-point favorite against the Detroit Pistons.

The Jazz reached the NBA Finals in 1997 and 1998, but they lost to the Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls both times.

At 40, Malone wanted so much to be on a championship team that he took an \$18 million pay cut to sign with the Lakers for \$1.5 million.

Was it worth it?

"Absolutely," he replied.

Malone changed his game when he joined the

Please see MAILMAN/2C

Shake it like a Polaroid at Bobcats' audition

By Herbert L. White
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The Charlotte Bobcats are looking for a few slick moves - among dancers.

On Saturday, the expansion NBA team will hold auditions for their first-ever dance squad at the Charlotte Coliseum, where applicants will perform before a panel of

judges from the entertainment, health and fitness industries.

The dance squad will perform at all home games, including preseason and postseason contests, as well as various community and promotional events. For additional information about dance squad auditions, log

on to the Bobcats website, www.bobcatsbasketball.com.

The Bobcats will hold auditions for their interactive squad on June 19 at the Coliseum. Participants must be 19 years or older to be eligible to tryout for the squad.

The interactive squad will consist of individuals who

have cheerleading and gymnastics backgrounds to form what will officially be known as the "Rally Cats."

Candidates wishing to audition should log on to the Bobcats website, download the application and fax back the form and resume to the attention of interactive squad tryouts at (704) 372-

7401. Candidates should pre-register, but can fill out an application at the audition. If there are additional questions, call (704) 424-4332.

The Bobcats tip-off their inaugural season in November at the Coliseum before moving to the uptown arena in 2005.