

Honoring competitors

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McCants literally is one of the most talented players - if not THE most talented player - in this year's draft class. He's my early pick for rookie of the year.

I'm really glad to see that Venus Williams won Wimbledon last week.

And not for the reason most people might think.

No, I'm happy for Venus because she scored another victory for the well-rounded human being.

For the past few years, Venus and her sister Serena have been roundly criticized for having interests outside the world of tennis. Venus has shown an interest in modeling, fashion design and art in recent years, while Serena has shown potential as an actress, among other things.

And far too many people said the Williams sisters needed to focus more - if not

solely - on tennis. Which is particularly hypocritical since we're also a nation that pretty much vilifies athletes who only care about sports.

I've got a new favorite athlete!

His name is Takeru Kobayashi.

No, Kobayashi doesn't play in the outfield for a Major League Baseball team. And, actually, you won't even find him on television more than one day a year.

You see, Kobayashi is the world's hot dog-eating champion. Specifically, he's a hot dog-eating legend. On Monday, he won his fifth consecutive title, eating 49 hot dogs in 12 minutes.

And you thought you ate a lot on the Fourth of July.

I know, I know: You probably don't consider Kobayashi an athlete. But ESPN airs the competition each year. And, hey, if horses and race car dri-

vers and golfers are considered athletes, then so is my man Kobayashi.

And while we're on the topic of unsung athletes, it's finally time for more of us to give some love to Lance Armstrong, who has a chance to win his seventh consecutive Tour de France in the coming days.

Look, you'll catch me Tivo'ing the Tour de France - or any bicycle race, for that matter. But I have to give credit where it is due. The boy is bad! And if a man competing in any of the so-called "major sports" ever won a championship six or seven times in a row, we'd probably be hailing him as the greatest athlete ever.

Armstrong certainly belongs in the argument.

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

NBA rookies lack fashion passion

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May wore a suit closest to his school's colors, but he didn't accessorize his assets. Light gray on blue, coupled with his light skin tone was akin to putting vanilla ice cream on rice. You couldn't tell May from his suit.

Real men don't eat quiche. But they sure can wear pink and get away with it. McCants sported a black pinstripe suit - what's up with the stripes - a pink shirt and hanky, and a yellow tie -

which he could have done without. Still it takes a strong and secure man to wear pink.

Barney is alive and well. The ugly tie award goes to Texas A&M's Antoine Wright. It was purple and as large as Barney (PBS's dinosaur). You kept waiting for it to come alive and hang him.

Got any cherries to go with that banana split? Admit it, you put on your sunshades after N.C. State's

Julius Hodge walked onstage in that canary suit, now didn't you? Bold is one thing, blinding is another.

The real No. 1. The real winners Tuesday night - bar none - were Wake Forest's Chris Paul and Jarrett Jack. Their school color ensemble of black pinstripe with gold shirt and tie was as good as it gets. And worth the price of admission.

BONITTA BEST is sports editor at *The Triangle Tribune* in Durham.

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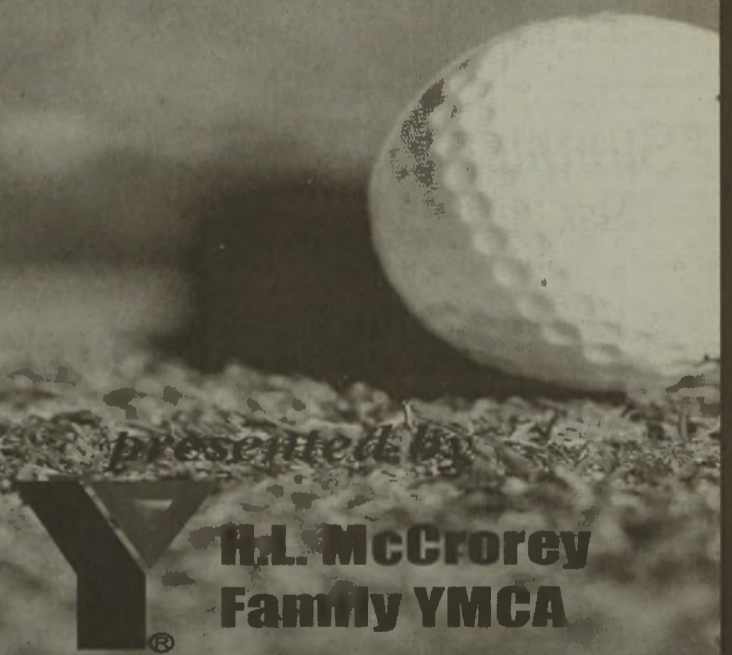


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