

Bogues makes transition to sideline with Sting

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into coaching, he undoubtedly is also using the knowledge he gleaned from his previous profession. As a point guard for the Hornets, the 13-year NBA veteran did his fair share of coaching on the court.

"I pretty much ran the show," said Bogues. "I got a feel of the game and knew where the ball needed to go, who needed the shot at a particular time and where they could be successful. When you have that responsibility, you feel pretty much like a coach out there, putting players at their strengths more than their weaknesses. Some

things you just never lose."

Though Bogues will surely endure some growing pains in the transition from player to coach, the added caveat of coaching women hasn't proven to be a complicating factor.

"Basketball is basketball," he said. "An elbow is an elbow, and you come off the screen the same way. Basically I know that they are not above the rim, it is a more fundamental game, more of a team concept. I need to understand what that all means and put them in the best situation where they can be successful."

Ex-coach and current

General Manager Trudi Lacey concurs.

"As Muggsy said, basketball is basketball," she said. "A purist of the game wants ball movement, sharing the basketball, and playing hard all the time. Those things are consistent."

Indirectly paving the way for Bogues, another ex-NBA star has enjoyed success as a WNBA coach, helping to popularize the hiring of NBA icons. Bill Laimbeer, a "Bad Boy" with the world champion Detroit Pistons of the late 1980s, led the Detroit Shock to the WNBA title in 2003, his first full-season of professional coaching.

"It's a proven fact: former professional players understand the game and how to treat the players," explained Laimbeer. "These aren't college players, they are professional players, and these coaches have been there before."

Bogues has already garnered acclaim from another player, Sting point guard

Helen Darling, who also moonlights as an assistant coach at the University of Memphis.

"He's a point guard, and as a point guard, you should know the game," Darling said. "Overall, his knowledge of the game is great, and there are other little things that he will get eventually. But he has a great support-

ing staff of assistant coaches and I think he'll be alright. He'll get these 10 games of experience to finish this season, and next year he'll come in with his own philosophies and plays. He'll be just fine."

For now, Bogues' goals remain simple. His focus rests on learning about his team as they build to compete next season.

Major changes for J.C. Smith

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team and won (in) the CIAA. I don't think he was drinking the Kool-Aid. I feel we can do it in three years or before then."

That the Bulls are even talking about such lofty goals can't mask Smith's 1-19 record over the last two seasons. McNeill was hired in December to pull the program out of the CIAA cellar, a familiar spot under former coach Tim Harkness. The first order of business was to recruit players who can compete for playing time immediately.

"We're real pleased with the depth that we have now, but we have to improve," McNeill said. "Each player has to improve to be better. Every position is wide open (so) that you're in a position where kids are competing more. No one is locked into any position."

Except Belton, an all-CIAA pick in 2003 who led the Bulls with 38 receptions last year.

"That's part of coach Mac's plan," he said. "He brought those guys in for a reason. He feels they can come in and contribute. I guess coach recruited a few more people who can put us in position to win the CIAA."

With so many new faces on campus, McNeill's task is to get the Bulls ready for the Aug. 27 opener against Glenville (W.Va.) State. Most of the players reported to camp in good physical condition, but nothing will be taken for granted.

"We're very pleased with the turnout, but every day is another day," McNeill said. "You just want to make sure you check up and make sure nobody turns in their keys at night and head home."

Belton, for one, likes the new approach.

"We've got to trust each other and be a team," he said. "Basically just changing our image, that's our main key."

Avalon makeover a stunner

WINFRED B. CROSS

Test Drive



Remember the stodgy Toyota Avalon, the Buick Century of the Japanese world? Well, Buick updated the Century a few years ago, so the Avalon had to follow suit, right?

Right. Wow, what a difference styling makes. The new Avalon has new creases in new places. It actually looks fast and sleek. There's a hint of BMW's current styling in the rear end. It's a knockout considering the boxy look of the old car.

The interior is as stylish. The frumpy dash is now modern. The climate and audio control are backlit and can also be hidden behind a panel. The gauge cluster is stylish with crisp lettering and blue back lighting. The gear shift is that complicated

gate pattern but the lever itself is nicely finished. I'm not crazy about the fake wood but carmakers are getting better at making such.

The front seats are big and comfortable, so long as you plan to use this as a family sedan. The rear has ample room for nearly every height. The rear seat on my XLS also reclined. Neat.

The engine got a big boost in the redesign. The 3.5-liter V6 makes 270 horsepower with nearly that amount in torque. It's potent, pressing back in your seat if you plant the accelerator to the floor. Traction control will step in before you get silly, but hey, it's a family sedan. The dual exhausts give the engine a very throaty sound.

Driving the Avalon is a good thing. It's by no means a sports sedan. There's a lot of float in the suspension and the body leans in corners, but it's predictable. It hustles along quickly on the 17-inch tires and the ride is comfortable.

The XLS stickers at \$30,800. That includes leather seats (heated up front), four-wheel ABS, full size spare with alloy wheel, seven airbags, heated outside mirrors with auto dimming function, dual climate controls, cruise, leather wrapped steering wheel and shift knob, Homelink, and rear reclining seats. Extra equipment included voice activated navigation, upgraded JBL audio system packaged with traction control and heated front seats.

Add in the luxury stuff and the price tag jumps to \$35,259. Steep? Maybe, but it's as good as any other car in the price range. It's also a Toyota. Is there more to be said?

Par-Busters open golf at Crystal Creek

The Par-Busters Golf Group will sponsor its open tournament Aug. 20-21 at Crystal Creek Golf Club, Pineville.

Entries are limited to the first 125 players and the entry fee is \$125 by Friday, \$135 afterward. A percentage of proceeds will benefit the Sickle Cell Regional Network and Junior Golf Program.

For information, call John Love at (980) 253-1176 or the Par-Busters Club House at (704) 334-4237.

• Matt Kilgore and Kendu Dunlap won the Tri-County Golf Tournament at Crystal Creek Golf Club in Pineville.

The pair won the 2-Man Best Ball tournament with a combined score of 131, two shots ahead of Donovan Daniels and Chris Hamilton.

• Matt Kilgore won Jacket A at Black Jacket Promotions' tournament at Crystal Creek June 4.

Kilgore shot a round of 68, one shot ahead of Josh Wilson and Briaddy Tiddy. Dick Stimart was fourth at 70. James Boulter topped the field in Jacket B with a round of 73, two strokes ahead of Andrew Robinson.

• Andy Wood shot a two-round total 153 to win the Elite Golf Association tournament in Greenville, S.C., on June 26.


Wood fired a second-round 75 at Verdae Greens Golf Course for a 153, one shot ahead of Wanda Green and two ahead of Greg Renfroe. Green had a first-round 75 at Millstone Golf Village to lead the field going into the final round, but shot 79 to fall behind Wood.

• The foursome of Tom Beatty, Jarnel Austin, Mike Boyd and George Cooper won the Livingstone College Celebrity tournament June 18 at Rocky River Golf Club in Concord. The pair finished with a 57, two shots ahead of Curtis Watkins, Mike Watkins, Johnnie Legrand Chris Bennett.

• Team Augusta/Greenwood/Capital City/Swainsboro won the IGA match June 18 at Forest Hills Golf Course in Augusta, Ga., with a combined score of 65 among 16 players. Greenville/Elite/Upstate Birdies also finished at 65 with 23 players. Chester/Spartanburg/Shelby/Charlotte finished fourth with 69 among 14 players.

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
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