

# Stephen A.'s empire

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Inquirer columns on his Blackberry, as he sits in the ESPN studios during commercial breaks. That's a man who's dedicated, not some guy who's doing just enough to get by, as far too many of my sports-writing brethren often do.

Sports Illustrated reported recently that the 37-year-old Smith makes more than \$800,000 a year from his various jobs. And while it's understandable to wonder whether Smith actually is worth the money, you had best believe he'll work hard enough to earn every penny. In addition, he's one of the best sports journalists I know. Scratch that. He's one of the best journalists I know, which is what got him on ESPN in the first place.

It's funny, though. In the sports journalism industry, a lot of people don't like Steve. His nickname among much of the mainstream media is "Screamin' A." Smith. Which is ridiculous, since Smith doesn't come close to being

the loudest or most obnoxious sportswriter on TV. Ever heard of Mike Lupica of the New York Daily News? Or Bob Ryan of the Boston Globe? Both are older, whiter and more explosive than Smith. Still, we've yet to hear such offensive nicknames for those men.

But that's just part of the deal in this business, if not this country.

Nonetheless, Steve's equipped to handle it. No, we won't always agree with what he does on his TV show. Heck, I'll go ahead and admit that I think the show's one-hour time span is too long. But I'll keep watching. He can carry this torch.

To Steve, I say, "Keep screamin'." To the naysayers, I say, "Keep your yappin'." This empire definitely strikes back.

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# Preseason answers questions

Continued from 1C

it down a couple of notches. Free-agent pickup Mike Wahle is the major acquisition, while Travelle Wharton is emerging as a productive, if not ground-breaking tackle. Jeff Mitchell and Jordan Gross are the anchors.

• Are there enough run-

ning backs? The Panthers are proceeding as planned without Stephen Davis, who is recovering from knee surgery. DeShaun Foster is the starter for the time being, but he'll likely be spelled by a committee led

by second-round draft pick Eric Shelton. Don't forget Nick Goings, who filled in capably for Davis and Foster, and Rod Smart, the third-string back in 2004 who went down with a knee injury.

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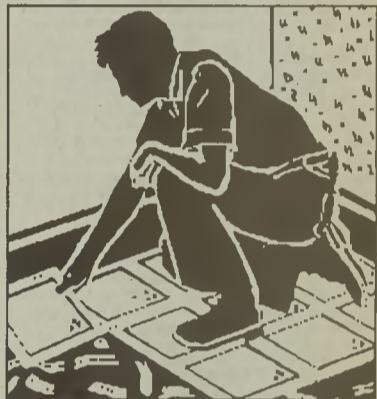
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Any questions call  
Gene Buccelli at the Urban League at  
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