

Smith already in form

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the impact of his return to the team and Smith's.



Smith

Folks, that isn't meant to diminish the importance of Davis, another V.I.P. - Very Important Panther. Hey, ever since he arrived here in 2003, Davis' downhill running style has been a commodity that opens up a potent passing game for the Panthers. But let's face it: We also know Davis is a very replaceable player.

The team's other prized running back, DeShaun Foster, is good enough to make the loss of Davis a minimal drop-off. And, if things go awry with Foster,

reserve Nick Goings showed last year that he is a valuable option (821 yards and a team-record-tying four consecutive 100-yard games as a fill-in in 2004).

With Smith, there exists no such alternative.

I know, I know: After Smith went down last season, former Panther Muhsin Muhammad stepped up his game and led the NFL with 1,405 yards and 16 touchdowns. Who knows where the Panthers would have been without Muhammad?

But the fact is, Muhammad isn't a playmaker.

Smith is. Muhammad almost always made the big catch when the Panthers needed it last year. He put them in position to win on various occasions. However, a play-

maker, such as Smith, makes the impossible a possibility. He turns short crossing routes into 80-yard touchdowns. He doesn't just make the big catch; he makes the catch that just doesn't appear... uh... catchable - when the game is on the line.

That was the element the Panthers were lacking last year - and what they absolutely cannot do without this year. Now, though, it's back.

This season, or as long as Smith remains healthy, the Panthers have a chance to go back to the Super Bowl. We know that absolutely is a reality.

Yes, even after that one stinking preseason game.

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

Darling steps up after Staley deal

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filling her box score with season highs across the board, with 11 points, seven assists and four rebounds.

"It's an adjustment," Darling said of her new, prominent role. "I'm dealing with it, as are my teammates, and I think they're adjusting to it well."

Since the trade, Darling has played 125 out of 130 minutes, including a career-high 47 in Charlotte's double-overtime win over the Detroit Shock.

"From three minutes to 40," Darling said, feigning a gasp for breath. "I think it is everybody's dream to be able to play 40 minutes, and I'm being given that opportunity. I'm just trying to take that opportunity and do well, get my team to win in the 40 minutes."

After four years at Penn State, Darling, a Columbus, Ohio, native, began her career in-state, drafted in the second round by the Cleveland Rockers. Darling spent the next four years in Cleveland, until the Rockers were contracted following the 2003 season. In the ensuing dispersal draft, Darling was sent to Minnesota, where she spent a season as the Lynx's starting point guard before being trad-

ed to Charlotte.

Once with the Sting, Darling was relegated to backup duty, a role that she hadn't held since her rookie season. With Staley as a fixture in Charlotte, Darling's prospects of cracking the starting lineup appeared unlikely.

"It was extremely difficult to let go of Dawn," said Sting General Manager Trudi Lacey. "But keeping our eye on the big picture, we wanted to give her a last gift, which was the opportunity to win a WNBA championship. Obviously, that wasn't going to happen for us this year. She's coming toward the end of her career, and we just wanted to do that for her."

Staley's gift helped Darling, who has flourished since the trade. In a time of transition for the Sting, Darling has been the rock on which new coach Muggsy Bogues relies on.

"She's steady," Bogues said. "She's comfortable with everybody on the floor. She gets everybody in the right place at the right time. She just has a steady game, and doesn't have many turnovers. She does an excellent job locating and understanding mismatches and exposing that."

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2005

BELLSOUTH COACHES MEDIA LUNCHEON
BellSouth Auditorium in the Vista
(invitation only)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2005

MISS CAPITAL CITY CLASSIC PAGEANT
Marriott Downtown
6:00 PM

TOM JOYNER'S BIG BREAK
S.C. State Museum
7:30 PM

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

CLASSIC STEP SHOW
Hosted by Doug Banks
Benjamin Mayes Human Resources Center
7:00-10:00 PM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

THE TOM JOYNER MORNING "SKY SHOW"
Columbia Township Auditorium
6:00-10:00 AM

GARNELL MCDONALD MEMORIAL
GOLF TOURNAMENT
Northwoods Golf Club
Registration: 7:30 AM
Shotgun Start: 8:30 AM

KICKOFF TO THE CLASSIC CONCERT
Featuring Young Jeezy
Township Auditorium
8:00 PM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2005

PCCC VENDOR VILLAGE
Williams-Brice Stadium

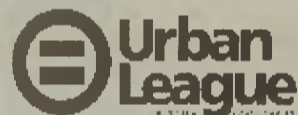
CLASSIC TAILGATE PARTY
State Fairgrounds
9:00 AM-5:00 PM

PALMETTO CAPITAL CITY CLASSIC GAME
BENEDICT COLLEGE VS.
JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY
Williams-Brice Stadium
Kick Off: 5:00 PM

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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The 12th Annual Urban League Guild Golf Tournament

The plush Verdict Ridge Golf & Country Club in Denver, NC on September 19th. An exciting day of golf, fun and fellowship. The day will begin with registration at 10:30 AM. A shotgun start at 12:00 noon for an upwards of 120 players. Included in the day's events Hole-in-One, Longest Drive, Closest to the Pin, Bloomin' Onion and "Beat the Pro." A cart lunch will be provided, as well as a steak dinner from Outback Steakhouse, followed by an awards ceremony and door prizes!

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Any questions call
Gene Buccelli at the Urban League at
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or
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Thank you in advance for your support

