

# Freshman takes over Bulls

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for 60 yards. "Any time you get in the red zone, you've got to score. That's what wins games like this. That took a lot out of our hearts when we missed the opportunity to do something big and it didn't happen."

Benedict took a 26-7 advantage into the break, but the Bulls' defense picked up the pace. After hammering Smith for 210 yards total offense, in the first half the Tigers managed only 42 yards and no points in the second. Smith linebacker Jerrell Goodwin pulled Smith to within 20-7 when he scooped up a Benedict fumble and sprinted 45 yards for a touchdown with 10:43 left in the second quarter. The Bulls' defense added a pair of safeties as well, but it wasn't enough.

"We tried to fire up the offense, but it's all good," Goodwin said. "We know they're going to keep working and keep getting better every week."

"I wanted better results," Richardson said. "Coming in here with my first actual start and playing most of the game it was kind of tough

picking up the speed of the game because the speed is much faster."

The Bulls' next three opponents - Virginia Union (1-2), St. Paul's (1-2) and Livingstone (0-3) - present the best opportunity for Smith to break its school-record 16-game losing streak. Nothing would boost the Bulls' confidence like a taste of success.

"All these games are winnable," Richardson said. "We're not a bad team, we've just got to bring it all together."

A little more offensive consistency would go a long way in accomplishing that goal.

"As a team, we're just going to work hard (this) week and...try to get a victory," Goodwin said.

"I've got to make big plays," Richardson said. "That's the thing about offense. You've got to keep everything clicking, make big plays and keep rolling, and have the team have your back while you're on the team because the quarterback is the leader on the field. I've just got to go out and play my game and make sure everybody is doing right."

# The coast couldn't be much clearer for Giants slugger

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the disabled list, is anything but coincidental.

After all, Bonds' rehab schedule often played out like a comedy of errors, characterized by stops and starts, shifting locations, too many doctors, even more unsolicited medical opinions and an infection that left him hooked up to an IV for two weeks in May. And even that seemed downright orderly compared to the flow of information.

Club officials inquiring about Bonds' condition couldn't always find him, often couldn't get phone calls returned and eventually found themselves, along with everybody else, logging on to his official Web site, BarryBonds.com, and trying to decipher one cryptic update after another. Fortunately, the confusion was cleared up over the weekend when, after

a handful of workouts and a simulated game, Bonds announced he was cleared to play.

The final twist was that the decision came not from anybody in the Giants' organization, but after a phone call to Dr. Lewis Yocum, the Angels' team orthopedist who worked with Bonds for more than two months in Los Angeles. But no one in San Francisco registered so much as a peep of protest. Told that Bonds left the decision about where to play and when to bat up to his manager, Felipe Alou's first response was, "Up to me."

But that was quickly followed by Alou penciling Bonds into left field and the cleanup spot with the NL West-leading Padres coming to town for three games. Like he actually had a say in the matter.

"I expect a lot with the bat," the manager said.

As for the sideshow almost certain to accompany Bonds' return, Alou added, "I wonder what's going to happen tomorrow in his at-bat, the reception."

As mentioned earlier, it's hard to imagine Bonds dealing himself a better hand. He makes his debut in front of a home crowd, with seven games left on an extended homestand, and the Giants' best chance in a long time to get back in the playoff picture staring them in the face.

In any division except for the stunningly bad NL West, San Francisco would have been finished weeks ago. The starters have been inconsistent and closer Armando Benitez missed 96 games with a hamstring injury, but even those deficiencies pale beside Bonds' absence.



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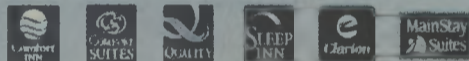
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