

C

SPORTS

Section

So long, Aggie-Eagle Classic

You won't see the esteemed college football experts on ESPN bemoaning the fact that the rivalry game between N.C. Central and N.C. A&T was brought to an end last week.

You'll barely hear talk-radio hosts across the state saying a single word about the dissolving of one of the best college rivalries this region ever has seen.

But that doesn't mean the Aggie-Eagle Classic did not matter.



C. JEMAL HORTON

It mattered a great deal.

College football in this state and beyond will be worse because it no longer exists.

And it deserved a more honorable burial than the cold, abrupt one it received.

The A&T-Central game, which began in 1924, effectively was killed by new A&T athletics director DeLores Tbdd, who Central A.D. Bill Hayes said informed him of the news via an answering machine message. Tbdd told several media outlets that the decision was made, in large part, because of concerns about A&T's "strength of schedule."

The Aggies compete at the NCAA Division I-AA level, while the Eagles play at Division II. Tbdd expressed concern that playing the Eagles, especially losing to them, could be a negative, in terms of A&T landing an at-large berth in the Division I-AA playoffs.

And, well, I guess there is SOME truth to that.

But Todd, a Winston-Salem State graduate, seems to be forgetting about one deeply important factor: tradition.

You don't just throw that away with some excuse about strength of schedule.

This is black-college football. And without tradition and pageantry, black-college football is nothing.

The number of players sent to the NFL is insignificant. The number of times a team is on television isn't the biggest deal. And, definitely, all the NCAA playoff berths in the world don't matter as much as tradition — at the grassroots level — when it comes to black-college sports.

And, when it comes to black-college sports, the tradition and pageantry doesn't get much bigger than the Aggie-Eagle Classic.

The Aggie-Eagle Classic was one of the best college football rivalries in the South. Among HBCUs, it was second only to the Bayou Classic, a game featuring rivals Grambling State and Southern.

Certainly, non-HBCU rivalries such as Auburn-Alabama, Clemson-South Carolina and Georgia-Georgia Tech get more attention. But the Central-A&T rivalry wasn't any less exciting, any less rich in tradition.

There's only one, distinct difference: Those aforementioned rivalries probably never will come to an end like the Aggie-Eagle Classic.

And so, as the rest of the North Carolina sports world goes on with its analyses of the Carolina Panthers' 1-1 start and that horrid Dallas-Washington game from Monday night, I beg for the revival of the Aggie-Eagle Classic.

Please see FLIMSY/3C



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Wins have been as elusive for J.C. Smith as Virginia Union quarterback John Grier was for linebacker Darwin Wilmore (51) in a 15-7 loss to VUU Saturday.

J.C. Smith's winless cloud has gold lining

By Herbert L. White
herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Winning is an elusive commodity for Johnson C. Smith's Golden Bulls, but there are signs of life.

The Golden Bulls improved their offensive production for the second straight week, but couldn't find enough points in a 15-7 loss to Virginia Union in the CIAA opener last week. Smith's school-record losing

streak is now at 17 going into Saturday's game against St. Paul's.

"It's not frustrating because we're growing, we're growing as a team, we're growing as a staff," Bulls coach Daryl McNeill said. "We're playing much better football than we did last year, and I hope that people see that we're being competitive."

But winning is another mat-

ter. Virginia Union freshman Michael Hampton (Olympic High) returned a punt 42 yards for a go-ahead touchdown to keep the Bulls looking for their first win since October 2003.

"That's the fourth one we've dropped that we should've won but that's the way things are. "We're going through some growing pains," said McNeill,

See JCSU/2C



PHOTO/MADE NASH

N.C. A&T and former East Mecklenburg High standout Marshall Glenn are struggling at 1-2 with the meat of its MEAC schedule on the horizon.

Aggie slide

1-2 N.C. A&T playing far from expectations

By Cheris F. Hodges
cherishodges@thecharlottepost.com

GREENSBORO — Under the spotlight of national television, North Carolina A&T's shortcomings were exposed.

The defense gave up 28 points in the first half.

The offense didn't score until midway through the third quarter.

Though the 31-17 loss to Hampton left the Aggies at .500 in the MEAC, tougher days lie ahead. A&T (1-2, 1-1) will be playing without the advantages of home, with only two more home games.

Head coach George Small said if the Aggies expect to make noise in the conference, they

can't play like they did last Thursday.

"We dug ourselves a hole we couldn't get out of and time ran out. We put ourselves there and that is something we're going to have to learn that we can not do that. We can not afford to do things in that manner," he said.

In both losses, the Aggies opponents scored first, held on to the ball longer and had more first downs. N.C. Central outgained A&T by nearly 200 yards in the Aggie-Eagle Classic on Labor Day, which Central won 23-22. Hampton did the same in its rout of A&T.

Small said the secondary is a problem that the team is going to have to work on.

After the Aggies' 16-14 win over Norfolk

See AT 1-2/2C

Panthers looking to build some momentum

By David D. Dawson
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Perhaps it was not a must win, but beating New England last week was a big win for the Panthers.

"It was not a do or die game for us," fullback Brad Hoover said. "But it was definitely a game that we needed to win. This is the way it should be every week for us. We are going to take the demeanor that we must work hard and me a more physical team. That's coach Fox's motto. That's our motto. So hopefully (winning) is a catapult."

The Panthers believe that the benchmark is now set for how the team must perform and looks to find ways to build on it.

"Now you know what it feels like to win. You can not settle for less when you come back to practice. You have to put the same type of work you did this week for the next week because you know that it works now," said Brentson Buckner.

Running back Stephen Davis, who ran for 77 yards on 25 carries against the Patriots, wants to cut down on mental errors.

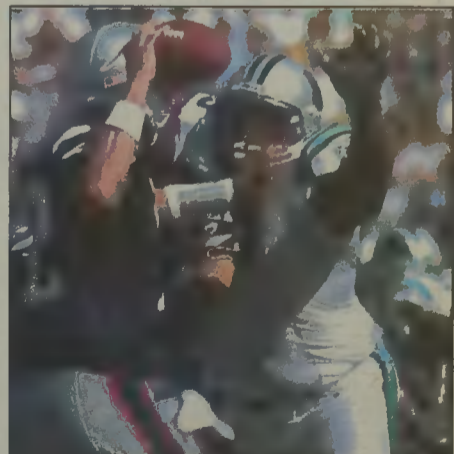
"This is a stepping stone for us as far as playing a game the way we did. We didn't have a lot of mistakes, but we did make some. We have to take this and put it in a bottle and get better with it," said Davis.

The NFC South has three teams tied at 1-1, while Tampa Bay leads at 2-0. Quarterback Jake Delhomme feels that it's early in the season to panic but understands how competitive the division is. He looks for the team to continue their momentum on the road against Miami, which has the league's 10th ranked defense, behind the Panthers.

"We're going to answer the bell this week," Delhomme said. "We're going to have to be at our best in Miami. They are very good on defense. We must remember what we did last week and carry it over. We played with a lot of passion and emotion. That was a big thing for us."



Davis



PHOTO/MADE NASH

Panthers defensive tackle Brenston Buckner gets into New England quarterback Tom Brady's face Sunday.

Bonds ready for rough treatment away from home

By Janie McCauley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Barry Bonds expects boos everywhere he goes, and the rough treatment often fuels the slugger's mighty swing all the more.

Most fans still love him in San Francisco, so this week is Bonds' first real taste of the taunting he's likely to get whenever he's away from the friendly confines of SBC Park.

"Boos, you're supposed to boo me, shoot," Bonds said, laughing. "They ain't mad at you, they like you, man. They're supposed to boo you - because I'm good, that's why. I'm coming to get them. ... I don't care, bring it on, baby You're supposed to (boo). It's all good."

Oh yeah, they will bring it at rowdy RFK Stadium, where the Giants are playing a three-game series against the Washington Nationals. Then they travel to Colorado for a

weekend series against the Rockies, before heading to San Diego to finish the 10-game trip.

Bonds started five games in his first week back following three operations on his right knee. He hit two home runs — splashing a towering shot into McCovey Cove during Sunday's 5-3 win over the Dodgers - to move closer to Babe Ruth and Henry Aaron on the career home run list.



Bonds