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SPORTS

Business 8C

Section

Class warfare over pro status

Before the young homies in the suburbs accuse me of hatin', let me make things abundantly clear: I don't have a problem with golfer Michelle Wie getting paid South Carolina lottery type money before she had her 16th birthday party.

Really, I don't. The way I see it, if you possess a talent for which people are willing to pay you millions of dollars, then you should be able to receive a W-2 and do it for however long as you wish - almost irrespective of age. All that matters to me is that it's a legal occupation.



C. JEMAL HORTON

Here's what bothers me about the Wie situation, though: Our nation's ever-passionate, always-critical sports fans

essentially shrugged their shoulders recently as Wie became one of the richest 11th-graders in the whole wide world.

Why does that annoy me? Well, because many of those same American sports fans were ready to march in protest a few years ago, when Maurice Claret wanted to go the NFL as a 20-year-old who hadn't been in college three years.

It was mere coincidence that Wie announced she had become a multi-endorsement-bearing professional sports star around the same time NBA camps opened with the last collection of players allowed to enter the league before turning 19, thanks to a new and unfair collective bargaining agreement.

Still, the contrasts in public reaction make things look bad.

People felt leagues such as the NBA were in dire need of an age requirement since all those ill-prepared high school kids were risking and missing so much in the professional ranks, but a golf prodigy just a few weeks removed from Sponge Bob Square Pants movies is somehow more equipped.

Please. And, no, I'm not hinting at racial bias. After all, as a Hawaiian with Korean-born parents, Wie isn't white or black.

This is all about socioeconomics - and how being poor still usually defers your sports dreams, no matter how industrious and talented you might be.

It's malarkey. Kids who grow up participating in sports traditionally played by the wealthy and

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Johnson C. Smith receiver Marquis Belton (North Mecklenburg High) hit his stride last week against Fayetteville State.

Something to build on

JCSU shows signs of offensive life in loss

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

Johnson C. Smith's Golden Bulls lost another football game, but found some offense.

Smith dropped its eighth game of the season and 21st in a row 34-23 to Fayetteville State Saturday, but had its best day moving the ball. The Bulls piled up 352 yards total offense and held the ball longer than FSU, a first this season. Smith led 23-20 going into the fourth quarter before Fayetteville rallied to salvage homecoming.

"I thought the guys played really hard,"

JCSU head coach Daryl McNeill said. "This was the best offensive production we have had all season. They are going to continue to play hard for the rest of the season."

Smith scored multiple offensive touchdowns in a game for the first time this season and topped its previous best for points in a game. Freshman quarterback Carlton Richardson had his



McNeill

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CIAA homecoming



FILE PHOTO/WADE NASH

CIAA rookie of the year Maurice Hooper returns at point guard for Johnson C. Smith, which was picked to finish first in the Western Division by league coaches.

Charlotte tournament offers convenience, exposure

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

The CIAA preseason basketball luncheon was homecoming for Dave Robbins and James Stinson, while Steve Joyner got to stay home.

Last week's gathering of coaches and media at the Charlotte Convention Center offered a preview of the season and the postseason tournament that Charlotte will host for the first time. Joyner, Johnson C. Smith's head coach,

already likes the convenience.

"It only took me 30 minutes to an hour to get up, get dressed and get to uptown Charlotte where in the past, I wasted maybe a day and a half getting to this particular meeting," he said. "It's a timesaver for me, personally."

For Robbins, who won his third



Joyner

Division II national title with Virginia Union last season, Charlotte is literally minutes away from his native Gaston County.

"Personally, it's always good to come home or near home," he said. "I grew up in Gastonia and we can throw a rock from Gastonia to Charlotte, so it's not that far away. I've always loved North Carolina. I enjoyed the tournament being in Raleigh and Winston-Salem and I'm

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Lady Bulls young, but excited

By Cheri F. Hodges
cherishodges@thecharlottepost.com

Johnson C. Smith's women's basketball is young and ready to play.

The Golden Bulls lost seniors Lauren Goss and Terri Edwards, who provided leadership and scoring last year, but head coach Vanessa Taylor said this year's team, which has been picked to finish fourth in the CIAA Western Division, will do a lot of work by committee.

"We will be led offensively by Tiana Pope and Brittany Sumpter," she said. "We're excited to have Brittany back into the lineup."

Sumpter went out late in the season with a knee injury and the Bulls only won two games in February and lost in the second round of the CIAA tournament to Elizabeth City State.

"Brittany is the kind of person who has stage presence, every body will feed off her energy," Taylor said. "She makes you play at another level. She brings a certain level of confidence to the floor as she plays."

Taylor said when Sumpter joined the team, they won 10 straight games.

"She was the separation from other teams (when she was on the floor)," she said. "We became dependent on her energy."

This year, Smith is young, with only one senior on the team, Judene Wright, who started all 27 games last year and ranked fourth in the conference in assist/turnover ratio.

"It's kind of like a recipe," Taylor said. "We have to shake it up and see in terms of developing confidence, we want them to be confident in what they're doing. Having a new team is like having a new car, you get in there and feel it out, you don't really know a lot of bad things about it but it looks good



Taylor

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Panthers front four still fantastic



PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Carolina defensive end Al Wallace drags down Detroit quarterback Joey Harrington in the Panthers' 21-20 win Sunday in Detroit. Carolina registered six sacks.

By David Dawson
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Carolina Panthers' defensive line is still pretty good.

The front four of Julius Peppers, Brentson Buckner, Jordan Carstens and Mike Rucker are again a force to be reckoned with. In a season of inconsistency despite a 4-2 record, the front four has shown improvement despite losing All-Pro defensive tackle Kris Jenkins.

Ranked second in the NFL against the run, the Panthers have allowed an average of 3.1 yards per carry and 77.7 rushing yards per game. NFC South rival Tampa Bay is first in run

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

TRAILBLAZING OFFICIAL

Richard Maple became one of the first two African Americans to referee high school football games last weekend in the Charlotte area. Maple led the officiating crew at a game at Northside Baptist, while Joe Suggs led a crew at First Assembly in Concord. Both men were assigned by the MetroLina Officials Association, which had never appointed black referees, according to WSOC-TV, The Post's television partner.