

C

Section

Knight should play; Ray can wait

Just watch.

It will be the single-hottest sports debate of the next six months for the Queen City.

"Raymond Felton or Brevin Knight: Who should be the Charlotte Bobcats starting point guard?"

The Bobcats will not have played a game in their sparkling new arena until Saturday against Boston, yet some already have anointed Felton, the North Carolina Tar Heel the team selected with the fifth-overall pick this past summer.

Actually, it's not much of a stretch to assume the MAJORITY of people who

follow the Bobcats— and, yes, there are some — prefer Felton over Knight, the NBA journeyman general manager and head coach B'ernie Bickerstaff



C. JEMAL HORTON

calls "our leader."

Well, let me put an end to the silliness: Knight should be the starter.

It's what's best for the Bobcats as a franchise and, believe it or not, it's what's best for Felton, who has as promising an upside as any rookie point guard in the league.

Knight is a consummate professional, though. He knows what it takes to be successful in the NBA. And since he's been forced to play for seven teams since he entered the league out of Stanford in 1997, he knows what it takes to bounce back from the adversity the NBA inevitably throws at its young.

Knight's already shown a willingness to share those adaptive mechanisms with Felton. And, hey, Knight's not stupid. He knows Felton was brought in ultimately to be the point guard for this franchise over the next decade or so. He knows Felton is that good, and he knows the Bobcats wouldn't have used the fifth-overall pick on Felton if the kid wasn't going to get chances to play eventually.

For now, though, Knight, who turns 30 next week, is what's best for this team. He has the best chance of keeping these neophytes from losing confidence and perspective as they take their ugly lumps as an expansion franchise.

Knight is the closest thing this team has to a leader at the moment.

"That's why I came back here - to play that role," Knight said after a recent Bobcats practice. "It's a role I'm ready to play. It's something I want to take on my shoulders. That's what I call myself - a leader. It's a lot to live up to, but I'm ready for it."

It's not as if Felton would be getting lessons from some bum of a point guard. While Knight isn't close to being one of the glamour point guards in the NBA, he showed last season that he has the ability to compete with them.

Last season, was the best of Knight's career. He led the league with a 4.01 assist-to-turnover ratio. He ranked second in the league in assists (9.0 per game) and fifth in steals (1.98 per game). He also established career highs in scoring (10.1 points) and free-throw percentage (85.2).

Please see VETERAN/3C

SPORTS



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Johnson C. Smith quarterback Carlton Richardson found himself on the run quite often during the Golden Bulls' 0-10 season. Richardson was named to the CIAA all-freshman team along with running back Andre Williams.

The Young & The Winless

J.C. Smith all-freshman QB considers 0-10 season a learning experience

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Carlton Richardson, like Johnson C. Smith football, has nowhere to go but up.

Richardson, a freshman quarterback who was named to the CIAA all-rookie team, suffered through a 0-10 season in which the Golden Bulls extended their school-record

losing streak to 24 games. But instead of lamenting the losses, he's using them as motivation to improve.



Richardson

"You've just got to take this experience with you, take what you can do and what you can't do on the field," he said. "You've got to be mentally set and also physically set to play in the CIAA. It's a matter of being focused and taking this experience with you."

Richardson put up decent numbers in his first season (65-of-149 797 yards, 1 TD), but the Bulls were inconsistent, especially in scoring territory. Twice in the season-ending 34-14 loss to West Division champion N.C. Central, Smith failed to score inside the Eagles' 10. It was a microcosm of the season.

"It's just the mental errors, know-

ing who to block, knowing who not to block," Richardson said. "It seems like we broke down and it's more my fault because I'm supposed to see the whole field."

The offense, which started five freshmen, including three on the line, showed flashes of potential, but were inconsistent. Richardson said Smith's inexperience on that side of the ball made the transition to the college game more difficult.

"We're a young team and it seems like some of us are still stuck in that mentality of high school football," he said. "In high school, it's more of a physical game, but in college, you have to have the mental aspect to go

with the physical aspect. "It seems like we've got to get our mental aspect on a better level than we did this year."

But there's always next year. This year's freshmen will be older. Tailback Andre Williams, who was also an all-rookie pick, should be recovered from a nagging turf toe injury that limited his carries. And Richardson is determined to improve.

"I have to get better," he said. "I have to get stronger in the weight room. I've got to get better in the film room, be able to break down coverages and see the whole field. I have to be that leader on the field."



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Panthers receiver Steve Smith, who has five 100-yard receiving games this season, runs away from Minnesota cornerback Fred Smoot.

This is how Panthers roll: Confident with attitude

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

The Carolina Panthers have discovered swagger.

Carolina played like a team that finally found it in last week's 38-13 win over Minnesota, and will try to build on it Sunday at Tampa Bay. Both are tied with Atlanta for first in the NFC South at 5-2.

"Tampa Bay has a great team," running back Stephen Davis said. "The thing we have to do now is get ourselves mentally prepared for

what we will face and get ready to go down there and it's going to be a hard-fought game. We always play each other tough and it's time to get excited."

Carolina has dominated the series over the last two seasons, winning four straight. The Panthers have momentum after reeling off the first perfect October in team history and the defense is starting to play up to expectations. After a week off, Carolina played its most thorough game of the season.

See PANTHERS/2C

Bobcats look to 'disrupt' expectations around NBA

By C. Jemal Horton

THE CHARLOTTE POST

The 2005-06 NBA season will be markedly different from most in recent memory.

Players will have a strict dress code, the last batch of players under 19 years old will be competing, and Phil Jackson won't be whispering

book notes into a tape recorder whenever Kobe Bryant does something wrong.

Alas, Bernie Bickerstaff remains the same.

He's still feisty as ever.

After a practice this week at shiny Charlotte Bobcats Arena, Bickerstaff, the Bobcats' general manager and head coach, was asked what he thought about playing the first home game in the new

See BOBCATS/2C



Bickerstaff



N.C. CENTRAL PHOTO

N.C. Central head football coach Rod Broadway led the Eagles to a 9-1 record and the CIAA West Division championship.

Eagles savor title of best in CIAA West

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

N.C. Central has played with a chip on its collective shoulder all season.

The Eagles, who will play in the CIAA football championship game Saturday against Bowie State in Durham, were left out of the Division II playoffs last year despite an 8-2 record. That was enough motivation for this year's team, which put together a 9-1 mark and the West Division title.

See N.C. CENTRAL/3C