

C. JEMAL HORTON

With some guidance, Artest would be an asset

Continued from page 1C
some people like to believe. He's not a malicious guy who takes pride in destroying things.

Sure, Artest has brought much of the public's criticism on himself. Kicking a basketball into the stands was wrong. Throwing a television monitor was wrong. The truth, however, is this: Artest has problems that require professional attention. And I'm not exaggerating.

Three years ago, Artest admitted to me that he was taking court-mandated anger-management sessions with a psychologist. The only problem is he didn't always

make the sessions.

"I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't rather be playing basketball," he told me.

The point of the story is this: Artest is a genuinely nice, likable guy. But his are too heavy for the Bobcats right now.

If Bickerstaff brought in Artest, he'd only be asking for trouble. Basically, that's the case for ANY team in the league right now, until Artest gets some serious help and sticks with it. But with the Bobcats, it would be magnified because this is a really good team. And, obviously, I'm not talking about its won-loss record.

No, the Bobcats are good people — young kids who know their roles and don't make a point of hassling with in-fighting and airing their grievances in the media.

Even the main veteran, Brevin Knight, is the strong, silent type.

Terrell Owens to the Panthers? Absolutely. Go get him. T.O.'s problems aren't as serious as Artest's, and the Panthers have plenty of veterans to guide T.O. But Artest to the Bobcats? No way.

What they're building here might not be great now, but it has a chance to be great one day without adding a combustible figure such as Artest to the mix. Doing that would set this franchise back a decade. And God only knows what would happen to Ron Artest if he is enabled once again without getting some serious help and sticking to it.

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



Artest

YANKEES RE-SIGN OF WILLIAMS

'Bernie! Bernie!' to be heard in the Bronx for another year

By Ronald Blum
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Fans at Yankee Stadium will be chanting "Bernie! Bernie!" again next year.

The Yankees announced Thursday that they had agreed to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract with the popular outfielder, who has been in pinstripes since 1991 and compiled statistics that put his name alongside the team's greatest players.

"He ranks right there with the Gehrigs and the Berras and the Ruths and the Mantles," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said.

Williams' playing time will be reduced following this week's agreement with Johnny Damon, who takes over as the starting center fielder. The shaggy-haired and bearded Damon passed his physical Thursday and got a haircut, a Yankees official said, and the team called a Friday news conference to finalize his \$52 million, four-year contract.

Williams had 485 at-bats last season, starting 99 games in center and 22 at designated hitter.

"There were no promises made in terms of certain amount of at-bats or where," Cashman said. "It could materialize as a pinch hitter, a DH, a pinch runner, an everyday outfielder, a defender whether it's left field, center field. It just remains to be seen."

Williams is now 37, but despite his diminished skills he remains a favorite of teammates and fans. He joins Yogi Berra, Frank Crosetti, Bill Dickey, Whitey Ford, Lou Gehrig and Mickey Mantle as the only players to spend 16 seasons with the Yankees.

"I'm happy to have him in the fold. He's a gem," owner George Steinbrenner said in a statement.

Williams did not participate in the finalization of his contract, leaving it to agent Scott

Boras, and Williams wasn't on the conference call to announce the deal.

"I know he's not an easy guy to track down in the winter," Cashman said.

Williams' contract allows him to earn an additional \$1.5 million in performance bonuses — \$115,384.62 for each 25 plate appearances from 150 through 450. New York had declined a \$15 million option, electing to pay a \$3.5 million buyout that concluded an \$87.5 million, seven-year contract.

Boras, who also represents Damon, said Williams could have gotten more money elsewhere.

"He took a lot less to come back to the Yankees because he values the Yankees tradition," Boras said.

Williams signed with the Yankees in 1985, took over as the regular center fielder in 1993 and helped lead the Yankees to four World Series titles and six AL pennants from 1996-03.

While he is a five-time All-Star and four-time Gold Glove winner, Williams batted just .249 with 12 homers and 64 RBIs in 485 at-bats last season, and his defense cost the team. Still, he is close to manager Joe Torre and his importance to the team goes beyond statistics.

Williams is taking over a reserve role held by Ruben Sierra since 2003.

"Quite frankly, he can do some things more than the individual who held that position the previous years," Cashman said.

Cashman said this agreement was "putting him in position to continue to hopefully remain only a Yankee for life and be one of those rare guys in this era to stay with one team."

"That," Cashman said, "is something extremely special and rare."

NEGOTIATIONS WITH N.C. A&T

Grambling State works to upgrade late-season football

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GRAMBLING, La. — Grambling State hopes to upgrade its opponent for the final regular season game and boost attendance at the same time.

The game, which falls just before the Bayou Classic bye week, has been tough to schedule. Most prospective opponents have entered their conference schedule by late November, leading to lightly attended matchups for Grambling against independents like Savannah State, the now-defunct Morris Brown and fledgling Concordia College. Crowds for this date over the past five

seasons have averaged a paltry 5,600.

So Grambling entered talks with traditional black college power North Carolina A&T about a possible neutral-site classic game.

The contest could be played in Phoenix, either at Bank One Park, the home of the Arizona Diamondbacks and this month's Insight Bowl, or at Sun Devil Stadium, site of the 1996 Super Bowl.

The game has an extra draw. A&T, which won a conference title three years ago but struggled to a 3-8 record in 2005, hired former Grambling great Lee Fobbs as its new coach this month.

Fobbs was an All-American under Grambling legend Eddie Robinson, then a finalist both to replace Robinson in 1997 and again when eventual successor Doug Williams left for an NFL job in 2004.

Grambling coach Melvin Spears was given the position a year ago, and led Grambling to an undefeated Southwestern Athletic Conference record on the way to the league championship.

"It would be a major Grambling affair," said Spears. "It would give us a chance to congratulate Coach Fobbs on getting the job. He's a testament to Grambling, and so is Pat Bibbs."

PROFESSIONAL FLOORING

Visit Our Showroom

MOBLEY'S

4930 Albemarle Road
Charlotte, NC 28205

Residential & Commercial Carpet Cleaning, Sales & Service

• New Carpet Sales • VCT • Hardwood Flooring
• Ceramic & Marble Tile

Thanks to God, this is our
"25th Anniversary Special"
New Carpet Installed

Carpet, Pad & Labor

Only \$21.⁹⁹ per yard



Carpet Cleaning
"3" Rooms & Hallway

Only \$105.⁰⁰ under
400 Sq. ft.

Vinyl Floor
Congoleum & Armstrong
Only \$15.⁹⁹ per yard

Duct Cleaning
Only \$20 per vent
"For Your Health"
Remove the Dust From Your Vents!



"SPECIALS" Valid With This Ad Only
Eddie Mobley, Sr. • Eddie Mobley, Jr.
Ph: 704-531-0155 • Fax: 704-536-4272

Experience Comfort.

Whether you're visiting Chapel Hill, Durham, or Raleigh, The Comfort Inn University is the perfect place to stay.

With amenities such as a deluxe continental breakfast, full fitness center, outdoor pool, and free high-speed wireless internet access, we know how to make you feel comfortable during your stay.

Other amenities include:

- Guest laundry center
- Valet laundry service
- Free USA Today Newspapers
- Free local phone calls
- Jacuzzi Whirlpool Suites
- In room coffee, iron, & hair dryer
- Daily weather forecast
- Fax & copy service available
- Waterpik massaging shower heads

Call today to book your room or visit choicehotels.com

LOCATED AT EXIT 270 OFF I-40, ONE BLOCK NORTH ON HWY 15/501 BEHIND OUTBACK BREAKHOUSE

Comfort Inn University
3508 Mt. Moriah Rd.
Durham, NC 27707



919.490.4949
choicehotels.com

We'll see you there.

CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

Your source for
local sports
The Charlotte Post

