

Handing awards to CIAA's best

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coach rarely got coach of the year honors either because the Tar Heels were expected to win or the coaches were just jealous. In 28 years, Robbins has been honored 11 times.

Stupid folks Everybody knows it's easier to become champs than to stay champs.

Standing over at the kid-dies table are my female and

male players of the year

The female award was a hard choice. On the one hand, Elizabeth City State's Celeste Trahan had another outstanding season. The sophomore center leads the conference in rebounds for the second straight year, while also averaging 20 points per game. But, record-wise, the Lady Vikings are the third-best team in the conference.

Shaw's Nastassia

Boucicault, on the other hand, is the No. 1 reason Shaw is still undefeated in the conference. The senior guard won the award for me after her performance against NCCU on Jan. 12. The Lady Eagles had rallied from a 17-point halftime deficit and had the momentum until Boucicault broke their backs by scoring Shaw's final eight points.

Waiting to be served with Boucicault is St. Aug's Antonio Fitzgerald. Yes, Fitzgerald is part of the most potent trifecta to come along in a while, but his presence opens up the gates for teammates Nicholas King and Claude Neeley.

The Falcons can't - and won't - win without him. Now, where's the food?

Golden Bulls eye first women's title

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Boxie, a Raleigh native, said she's glad the tournament is in Charlotte. As the host school, more Smith fans and alumni showed up to produce larger than usual crowds for the women's games.

"Last year we didn't get a bye and not a lot of people come the first day," she said. "This year we had a lot more people in the gym and we had a lot of home fans."

Smith's band added a

touch of Brayboy madness to the arena with music and taunts and shouts of "where we at? Charlotte!"

Taylor said Smith's success will help keep fans in the seats.

"When you win, attendance is good," Taylor said. "But there is so much parity in our league and people are just going to stay around to watch good games. A lot of the games have been close."

Oakland OF reports to training camp

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him at any time. But when asked for an interview Sunday by a San Francisco Chronicle baseball writer, Bradley refused.

"I'm really not dealing with the media this spring," Bradley replied when asked by public relations director Jim Young to talk to reporters. Injuries to his right ring fin-

ger and left knee limited Bradley to 75 games last season.

He was coming off a 2004 season in which he set personal career bests with 19 homers and 67 runs batted in.

Bradley was suspended twice in 2004, the second time in late September for throwing a plastic bottle back into the stands in Dodger

Stadium.

Also, Beane said that even though he and Barry Zito worked out next to each other in the weight room, he wouldn't talk directly to the former Cy Young Award winner about a new contract to replace the current deal that expires after this season, and would instead deal with Zito's agent, Arn Tellem.

When reminded that other free agent pitchers had signed for extravagant sums the past offseason - Kevin Millwood for \$60 million over five years by Texas and A.J. Burnett for \$55 million over five years by Toronto - Beane said it would be a challenge for anyone to sign Zito, especially the Oakland A's.

Jordan impresses Braves at 1B

By Charles Odum
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KISSIMMEE, Fla. - Brian Jordan fielded ground balls at first base as he attempted to improve his chances of making the Atlanta Braves roster as a utility player.

Jordan, one month away from his 39th birthday, was invited to the Braves' camp as a non-roster player. He hit .247 with three homers and 24 RBIs last season, when he couldn't hold a starting job.

Jordan, who said he initially was drafted as a shortstop

out of Milford Mill High in Baltimore, caught the eye of manager Bobby Cox with his agility in the infield.

"He's bouncing around out there," Cox said. "He plays first base pretty good. He catches the ball really nice. I was pleasantly surprised."

Adam LaRoche returns at first base after sharing time with Julio Franco the last two years. Franco signed with the New York Mets as a free agent.

If LaRoche doesn't win the full-time job, Jordan wants to be considered among

other right-handed hitters who could fill the void left by Franco's exit in the platoon.

"The more the merrier," Jordan said of the competition.

"I just want to show them I can do it if they need me. ... It just gives Bobby more options."

Said Cox: "It doesn't hurt him."

Jordan had surgery on Nov. 15 to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee.

"He looks fine to me," Cox said. "He's going through the paces awfully hard."

Davis, Buckner, Smart released

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mate to have on your football team."

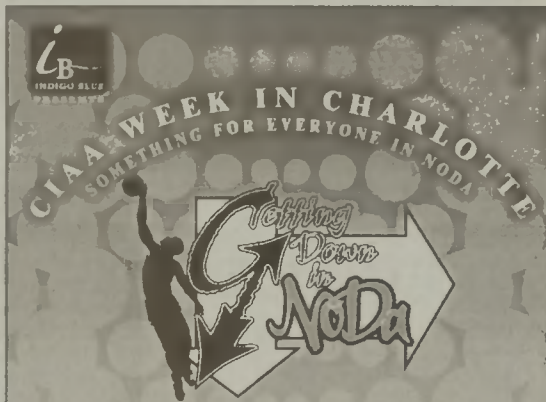
Buckner, 34, joined Carolina in 2001 and set a team record for games started at defensive tackle with 65. He totaled 226 tackles and 14.5 sacks in five years with the Panthers. Over the last couple of years, Buckner openly discussed the possibility of retiring, and prepared for life after football by developing an on-air presence as a studio guest with NFL Network.

"Brentson was here when we arrived in 2002 and was an outstanding leader as well as player for us," Fox said. "He set a great example for our younger players in his prepara-

tion and will be missed."

Smart, 29, had been the Panthers primary kickoff returner the past three years before Jamal Robertson passed him on the depth chart late last season. Smart was also a "gunner" on kick coverage and led Carolina in special teams tackles in 2002 with 24. A former star in the defunct XFL, Smart's legacy is his nickname from that league: "He Hate Me."

"Rod helped us in both our return and coverage games," said Fox. "He is a hard-nosed guy who served as one of the special teams leaders and played a big role in that unit's success over the years."



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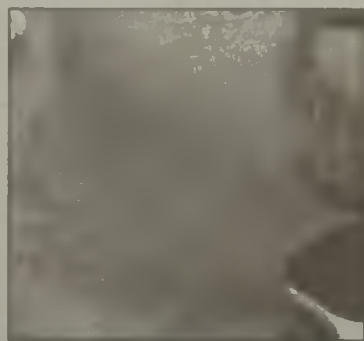
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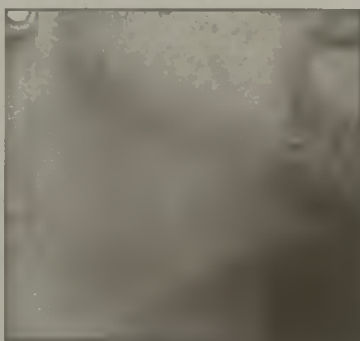


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