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SPORTS

Section

SOUTH MECKLENBURG EARNS N.C. CHAMPIONSHIP



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

ON TOP OF THE WORLD: South Mecklenburg High forward Joy Cheek (30) was all smiles celebrating with Principal Marian Yates (in hat) and teammates after the Sabres' 60-53 win over Apex in the N.C. 4A girls' basketball championship.

Finally, mission accomplished

By Eric Bozeman
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

South Mecklenburg High accomplished its mission of winning the N.C. 4A girls basketball championship.

Coach Troy Gaston said the run to the state title, which ended with a 60-53 win over Apex Saturday in Raleigh, was a long time coming. "It's flat out incredible," he

said. "Sometimes you ask yourself the question as a coach are you worthy of such talent. Then you sit back and say you don't have to be worthy because it's yours."

Star forward Joy Cheek, who is committed to play at Duke next year, said she set a championship as her goal four years ago.

"It's the best way to finish

off my career, it's the only way I could imagine myself doing it," she said. "I said when I came here my ninth grade year that's how I wanted to end my last year winning a state championship."

Cheek, scored at game high 22 points for the Sabres, and she believed the turning point was earlier in the season when South Meck fal-

tered to the Butler Bulldogs in the conference championships.

"When we lost to Butler in the conference championship that was the turning point in the season," Cheek said. "We all sat down and talked to each other then we were all on the same page, and felt we were going to win."

The Sabres finished the

season 27-3, Cheek was the tournament MVP, but she had help from Betsy Horowitz and Erica Williams, who both scored 13 in the final.

"It's the best way possible to end this part of my life, I couldn't have dreamed of a better way of ending this," said Horowitz, who is going to Virginia Tech on a volley-

ball scholarship. "Even if I had chosen basketball in college it would have been hard to overcome this experience."

Cheek said she knew there were doubters who wondered whether South could get it done.

"I try not to get into what people say. I wanted to win but that didn't define me as a player," Cheek said.



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Johnson C. Smith quarterback Carlton Richardson (10) has bulked up since his freshman year, in which the Golden Bulls went 0-10.

JOHNSON C. SMITH FOOTBALL

Spring drills bring a rare sight: Competition

By Herbert L. White
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Carlton Richardson endured a winter of discontent.

The Johnson C. Smith quarterback heard the jokes and criticism - on and off campus - of a second straight winless season. So he's dedicated himself to improving his skills, and by extension, the Golden Bulls.

"To me, I had to take it personally in order for me to work harder," he said. "Taking some of the criticism around campus where the students are like 'our football team sucks,' stuff like ... not getting any respect from other teams and coaches. I just had to take it personal to get myself better and get my team better."

Richardson's growth is evident. As a scrawny 170-pound freshman last year, Richardson struggled to keep pace with the college game.

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McNeil



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Charlotte Bobcats center/forward Melvin Ely has been a double-figure scorer whether he starts or comes off the bench.

As starter or off bench, Ely a consistent presence

By Roland Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Is Melvin Ely more productive for the Bobcats when he starts or when he comes off the bench? A strong case could be made for either scenario.

Ely, a forward/center has adapted to both roles, although

he's been forced to play more minutes as injuries have depleted Charlotte's frontcourt depth. Ely is not known for his toughness but his ability to do whatever is needed to help the Bobcats. Most days it's giving the interior offense a jolt; oth-

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