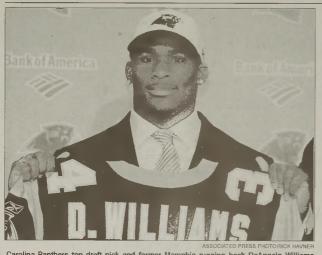


Thursday, May 4, 2006



arolina Panthers top draft pick and former Memphis olds his jersey at a press conference Sunday at Bank of back DeAngelo Williams Stadium. Williams boosts

## **Contender Panthers** draft to boost depth

Continued from page 1C

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Continued from page 1C Branch, who is expected back after missing all of last sea-son with a knee injury The team also has signed veteran free agent Shaun Williams at the position after last year's pleasant surprise, Marlon McCree, signed with San Diego as a free agent. Salley spent two years in the same Ohio State defen-tive backfield as Panthers starting cornerback Chris Gamble. Fox said he liked Salley's experience in a high-level program and the fact that he functioned as "quar-terback" of the Buckey see-ondary.

The program and the fact that he functioned as "quar-terback" of the Buckeye sec-ondary. "In never thought the Panthers would be the ones to pick me," Salley said by telephone from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Sunday. "It's a blessing right now." Most of his experience at Ohio State was at free safety. Salley said, playing to his strengths of physicality and pange. He said he hopes to become a more sure tackler in the NFL. In the fifth round, with the 155th selection, the Panthers took Virginia Tech's Jeff King, à 6-foot-5, 256-pound tight end who will be groomed as a potential suc-cessor to longtime starter Kris Mangum. Though tight end is not a high-profile posi-tion in the Panthers' offense, Mangum is entering his ninth year and backups Mike Seidman and Michael Gaines have failed to assert themselves as potential suc-cessors.

sors. Obviously Carolina's going run the football and I'm going to pride myself or

blocking and hopefully catch some balls as well when called upon," King said by telephone. "No question, my blocking is going to have to be really good and I'm going to work on that and improve on it if there's some weak-nesses there." For said he sees King as capable of playing both full-back and tight end. In the seventh round, the Panthers added a third Virginia Tech player, draft-ing center Will Montgomary as a potential backup to free agent pickup Justin Hartwig It's the first time the Panthers have drafted three players from the same school in the same NFL draft. Carolina wrapped up the

draft

Interpretation the same NFL draft. Carolina wrapped up the draft Sunday by selecting defensive end Stanley McClover from Auburn three picks later, the 237th overall selection Meanwhile, three of the Panthers'Day One selections – first-round running back DeAngelo Williams and third-round picks Rashad Butter, an offensive lineman, and James Anderson, a line-backer – toured Bank of America Stadium with Panthers owner Jerry Richardson and showed off their new jerseys for reporters Sunday. The 5-9 Williams, the nation's leading rusher as a senior at Memphis, was given No. 34, the same num-ber he wore in high school in Arkansas when he idolized Texas running back Ricky Williams

DeAngelo Williams will be in the mix with two other

backs – second-year player Eric Shelton and veteran backup Nick Goings – for the carries not given to lead back DeShaun Foster. Foster has not been particularly durable during his first four seasons in the NFL, which could mean an early opportunity for Williams to make an impact.

The Desthere's mark and the second se

ed ACC. The Panthers' second-round pick, Richard Marshall, a cornerback from Fresno State, was the only early draftee not able to make the trip, he and the other draftees – plus free agent newcomers like wide-out Keyshawn Johnson \_ are due in Charlotte for a mini-camp that begins Friday. Anderson spoke for all the players - especially the

camp that begins Friday. Anderson spoke for all the players - especially the madly grinning Williams -when he said, "Right now it feels like I'm dreaming. Just sitting here wearing a Carolina Panthers hat, I just put down a jersey that had my name on it. I'm like a lit-tickid in a candy store, walk-ing around." Williams couldn't stop milling about his selection. "I'm still jacked up," he setting (No.) 34, I was excit-ed about that. Everything is exciting.... "Carolina, it's still in the South I don't have to worry about mixing sugar in my sweet tea."

## Diesel Benz isn't blowing smoke with performance liter 24-valve, turbocharged

playing. Driving this diesel is no dif-

Driving this diesel is no dif-ferent from any other Mercedes. It's rock solid on the open highway, giving you the feeling you are protected by a tank. The tertainly doesn't feel as if you are driving a tank. The steering could use a little more feel, but communicates the road to the driver won-derfully well. The ride is favorite-armchair-comfort-

WINFRED B. CROSS Test Drive

While some carmakers kick around the merits and draw backs of hybrids, Mercedes and a handful of others keep plugging away with the

Yes, the diesel. You know, those cars that blow out the smelly black smoke and clanky valves.

Nope, those were your father's diesels. Most are as quiet as any other car and spew nary a cloud of ebony fumes

fumes. The biggest advantage of diesels is the great gas mileage without a pricey penalty. Mercedes offers a diesel E Class that's not much more than a regular sedan but gets nearly 40 mpg in highway driving - with a six cylinder. The E320's 3.2-

liter 24-valve, turbocharged engine makes 201 horsepow-er, which is just OK. But the forque produced is an amaz-ing 369 pounds-feet, which authority. The car clicks through its five-speed gear-box to 60 mph nearly as fast as its gasoline counterpart. You don't notice much lag. Press the accelerator and you're off There is a bit of noise under hard accelera-tion but its nearly complete-ly muted if the windows are up and the exceptional Harmon Kardon stereo is playing. able, but has enough sport to lead you toward a few twisti At \$51.050, the E320 CDI

At \$51,050, the E320 CDI is nicely equipped, but a few things I think should be standard at that price are optional Another \$2,950 gets you a six-disc changer (replaces a single unit), glass surroof, power rear window shade, heated front seats, upgraded surround stereo system and DVD-based nav-igation system. That takes the as-tested price to \$55,465 once you throw in the \$690 for paint and \$770 for desti-nation.

for paint and \$770 for desti-nation. That's more than I can pay for a car, but the 27 city/87 highway figures makes this luxury car seem more sensi-ble and attractive. It's avail-able in all but five states due to emissions regulations. It's those states' loss. This diesel is a sweet ride that sips gas (expect a 700 mile cruising range per fillup) and looks good. Is there more to ask of a car?



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