

Sting challenged to account for play

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this. We just have to all have it at all times. We need to have all five people on the same page...we can't have three and two or four and one."

Yet, in spite of agreeing with Bogues, the Sting is struggling to play consistent basketball. Or, maybe the problem is bigger than anyone thinks. Maybe the words are getting through, but this

team just isn't that good.

Center Tammy Sutton-Brown believes Charlotte still has a chance to turn the season around, but each player must pull her weight.

"We just have come out and

establish ourselves on defense," she said. "We all have to hold our own selves accountable, not relying on someone else to get us pumped up, but go out there and have pride in ourselves

and focus. So it's an individual thing, definitely."

If the Sting has any hope of improving, it begins today against expansion Chicago, where Charlotte is trying to win a second straight road

game. The Sting returns Charlotte Bobcats Arena Saturday to face the Sacramento Monarchs at 6 p.m.

Jordan, Bobcats face long list of hurdles to win converts

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about the team's direction in the one area where the Bobcats have appeared to be on firm footing - building a playoff contender.

Johnson has said Jordan's new role - his official title is managing member of basketball operations - means coach and general manager Bernie Bickerstaff will take all major player decisions, such as trades and signings, to Jordan for approval. Previously, it was Johnson who signed off on such decisions.

"We'll exchange ideas," Bickerstaff said. "I think it would behoove both of us to listen."

On Thursday, Jordan helped run a workout with Rudy Gay of Connecticut, one of several players the Bobcats are considering taking with the third pick in Wednesday's draft, and several other potential draft picks.

Jordan helped conduct drills during most of the workout, but retreated from the practice court to a balcony by the time reporters were let in. A Bobcats spokesman said Jordan would not speak with reporters, but the team's newest part-owner later spoke with the hometown Charlotte Observer and two other newspapers.

"I think I have enough (credibility) to go to Bob and say, 'We need X amount of dollars to make sure we can build the foundation,'" Jordan said. "Unless we do that, the business is never going to flourish and that's been proven in the past."

The draft has been the cen-

terpiece of Bickerstaff and former team president Ed Tapscott's plan to build the Bobcats around a core group of young players, including Emeka Okafor, Raymond Felton and Sean May.

Tapscott was ousted last month in a front-office shake-up, before Jordan came on board. But the plan has shown some signs of success. Despite a roster decimated by injuries, the team improved from 18 to 26 wins this past season and ended the year with a franchise-record four-game winning streak.

Jordan's only previous NBA management experience was in Washington, where he reigned as the Wizards' top decision-maker from 2000 to 2003. At first, as part owner and president of basketball operations, he tried to run the team from his home in Chicago - a strategy that often left the rudderless team to falter on its own.

His selection of high school player Kwame Brown with the top pick in the 2001 draft was a disaster. And when he decided to return to playing in 2001-02, he junked a careful rebuilding plan in favor of a veteran-heavy push for the playoffs that failed miserably - and was followed by Jordan's 2003 ouster by Wizards owner Abe Pollin.

This time, there appears no chance Jordan will take the floor. He doesn't plan to move his family to Charlotte, but said his brother lives in the area. "I do come in more than you guys know," he said. "I'm more of a local than you think."

Johnson has said he does not intend to use Jordan's

star power to market the franchise - the area in which the Bobcats need the most help.

"I'm not a seller," Jordan said. "He is fully aware I'm not a part of a dog-and-pony show. I want to build this team so that the team supports itself."

Sportscorp's Ganis doesn't buy it.

"Of course (Johnson is) going to leverage him to market the team," Ganis said. "That's what Michael Jordan does best, now that he's not playing basketball anymore. ... It would be the height of foolishness not to use Michael Jordan for what he does best."

The Bobcats still are fighting bad feelings left over from the 2002 departure of the Hornets for New Orleans, and the long and ugly fight in Charlotte over building a new arena.

The team added to the problems with its own mistakes. Before the first season, Johnson signed a cable deal that put most Bobcats games on a new, team-owned regional sports network. But Carolina Sports and Entertainment Television was only available to digital cable subscribers and flopped so badly that Johnson folded it after one season.

But he remains locked into a long-term cable deal, and the team's games are now shown on a local cable news channel.

The team also generated ill will when it boosted ticket prices after moving into the new arena. Burned by mediocre attendance, Johnson announced in February that he would drop 2006-07 season ticket prices

for about 11,500 seats, or 70 percent of the arena. The push to put fans in the seats even has the team selling \$199 season tickets to seats in the arena's upper corners.

"Mistakes have been made and some decisions should have been second-guessed," Jordan said. "What's been asked of me is my opinion about how we should attack this scenario, and I feel it has

to be done on the basketball court."

While Jordan might not woo those thinking about buying nosebleed seats, Ganis envisions the team using him as a "closer" to sell luxury suites or to play golf with a CEO who's close to buying a sponsorship or putting his company's name on the arena.

"If it's used well and they

are not too afraid of asking Michael to join them at certain events and activities, then it could be a real boon," he said. "If he intimidates the staff, if Bob Johnson is afraid to ask him to participate ... then they're wasting a phenomenal aspect of this opportunity."

On the Net: CharlotteBobcats.com

LIVINGSTONE HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Livingstone inducted nine individuals to its athletic hall of fame earlier this month in Charlotte. The inductees are from left: Lavilla Watson, Marjorie Kinard (posthumous induction for the Rev. John Kinard), Kellee Dillard Watkins and Shannon Cherry. Back row: Troy Veale, Probus Perkins, Clifton Huff, Robert Wiley, and Dorsey Montgomery.



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Charlotte Bobcats

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