

C

SPORTS

Section



TIMES AND DEMOCRAT/VAN HOPE

S.C. State's Bulldogs run through a drill at preseason camp in Orangeburg, S.C. The Bulldogs are two-time MEAC runners-up.

In MEAC, it's redemption time

By Herberl L. White
herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Everyone at the top of the MEAC food chain is looking for redemption. Hampton, which has evolved into the league's alpha program, shows few signs of loosening its stranglehold on the championship, yet plays with the specter of successive first-round flops in the Division I-AA playoffs.

The Pirates, who open the season No. 13 in the nation, have a bruising offense led by tailback Alonzo Coleman and the conference's top defense, spearheaded by Buchanan

Award finalist Justin Durant. Hampton, which went unbeaten in league play and 11-1 overall in 2005, has incentive to stay on top. Those playoff defeats the last two seasons, are all the inspiration this group needs.

S.C. State should be inspired by its failings, too. The Bulldogs haven't been able to beat Hampton, which has kept them out of postseason play. This year, the two meet in Orangeburg, and SCSU would like nothing better than to play for first on their home turf. S.C. State is a mirror image of Hampton with a run-

oriented offense and quick defenders. Junior running back DeShawn Baker is a 6-1, 225-pound hammer from Charlotte who'll set the tone on offense.

Delaware State, which went a surprising third at 6-2 in conference games last year, is primed to challenge in 2006. The Hornets return 11 starters, including seven on offense. With four starters on defense, DSU needs to develop continuity quickly and put the offense in position to win games.

Florida A&M may be the ultimate
Please see MEAC/2C

White Sox play like champs

Sweep of first-place Detroit tightens AL Central race

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

All of a sudden, the Chicago White Sox are chasing more than a wild-card berth.

The World Series champions played like serious AL Central challengers, with Freddy Garcia pitching the White Sox past the slumping Detroit Tigers 7-3 on Sunday for a three-game sweep.

Down by 10 games in the division last Monday, Chicago pulled within 5 1/2 games of the first-place Tigers. With their sold-out crowd chanting, "Sweep! Sweep!" the White Sox won their fourth in a row.

"We're going to keep fighting to the end, whether it's in a ballgame or whether it's in a pennant race," said Jermaine Dye, who hit his 31st home run.

Detroit still has the best record in the majors. But the Tigers also have their longest losing streak of the season at five.

"We got what we deserved (last) weekend," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said.

Garcia (11-7) won for the first time in six weeks and Bobby Jenks closed for his major league-leading 33rd save. Alex Cintron delivered two key early hits that set back the Tigers.

"They have to be fired playing like that everyday," Cintron said. "Sooner or later, they're going to have a bad week. They're going through that right now."

The White Sox improved to 9-3 against Detroit this season. The teams play seven more times down the stretch.

Tigers starter Zach Miner (7-3) left after 5 1-3 innings. His catcher, Ivan Rodriguez, also got an early exit when he was ejected for the first time this year.

Rodriguez had to be restrained by teammate Carlos Guillen after getting tossed in the eighth. Rodriguez argued when he was called out on strikes, then charged from the dugout when plate umpire Tim Timmons ejected him.

"We need to reflect again and try to do the things that we did the last couple of weeks," Rodriguez said.

"We're going to keep fighting to the end, whether it's in a ballgame or whether it's in a pennant race."

White Sox outfielder
Jermaine Dye



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO/CHUCK BURTON

Carolina Panthers running back Deangelo Williams (34) runs between Buffalo Bills Troy Vincent (23), Rashad Baker (26) and Angelo Crowell (55) during the Panthers' 14-13 win Saturday at Bank of America Stadium.

Crash course

Wide-eyed Williams learning on the job at Panthers' training camp

By Mike Cranston
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPARTANBURG, S.C. — Unprepared to live in a dormitory, surprised by the size of his playbook and shocked by the speed of his teammates, DeAngelo Williams was overwhelmed going into his first NFL training camp.

Carolina's top draft pick got crossed up even before he arrived at Wofford College, when the wide-eyed running back naively asked coach John Fox what kind of cable the team had in its hotel room.

"He said, 'Hotel? We're staying in a

dorm," Williams recalled. "So I said, 'What about the TV, do we have TV?' He said, 'It's \$85.' Then I got in there and I couldn't see the TV from my bed."

"You see these guys on television and they portray training camp as guys laughing, hanging around and drinking water - it's nothing like that at all."

Even after fumbling during an 11-on-11 drill during the first week of camp, Williams hadn't lost his sense of humor.

He's slowly absorbing the Panthers' playbook - which is phonebook-size compared to what he had at Memphis,

where the offense centered around the 5-foot-9 speedster.

"I think we had eight plays at Memphis - two runs to the left, two runs to the right, two passes to the left and two passes to the right," Williams said. "We had one sheet they passed out."

At Memphis, Williams set an NCAA career record by amassing 7,573 all-purpose yards. He finished fourth all-time with 6,026 yards rushing, and went over 100 yards on the ground in 34 of 44 college games.

So far, it's been a much different
See WILLIAMS/2C

J.C. SMITH FOOTBALL



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Johnson C. Smith football coach Daryl McNeill has issued a challenge to cornerback De'Audra Dix: score points on defense.

Dix's goal: Turn 'D' into 'O'

By Herberl L. White
herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

The junior flashed big play potential last year, blocking three kicks and picking off a pair of passes in addition to 35 tackles.

"I've challenged him to score in every game whether it's a PAT block, an interception or kickoff return," McNeill said. "I feel he can do it and I know he can win a game for us doing one of those things."

"That's the coaches," Dix said. "They put me in the right place. I just make the plays."

He'll have plenty of opportunities in a secondary that returns three starters. In addition to playing cornerback, Dix will be a regular on special teams, where he'll return kicks.

"I'm just taking the God-given talent and working hard every day," he said. "If I can help the team scoring on defense to win games, that's what I'll do."

Dix is fast enough to handle single coverage and supports against the run. He's rarely out of position, said sophomore quarterback Carlton Richardson, who tests Dix daily in practice.

"His speed blows me away the way he flies around the ball," Richardson said. "You can bait him all you want, but he's so quick... if he makes a little bit of a mistake he has the speed to get back on that route."

Said McNeill: "He has the foot speed, he has the toughness, he has the great awareness of the football as far as breaking on the ball. Hopefully people will throw his way so he can get some
See DIX'S/2C

Sting improved over 2005, but more needed

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Charlotte Sting hit stride just as the season came to close.

The Sting ended the regular season with an 84-57 blowout of Chicago to close 11-23, nearly doubling last year's win total.

"I've been waiting for a game like that," coach Muggsy Bogues said. "Although it took the very end of the season for the Sting to hit on all cylinders, Bogues said he was encouraged by the way his first full season ended.

"I'm happy I took on this challenge," he said. "This is [my] first year... with a full season understanding the league... and what coaching was all about. I'm just going to continue to learn and get better."

Charlotte center Tammy Sutton-Brown, who averaged 11.1 points per game, said the last part of the season is something the team can build from.

"There were spurts," she said. "We didn't start off too well, but after the

All-Star break, there were a lot of good spurts, and stuff we just have to build on."

Without the pressure of playoffs Charlotte played its best basketball.

"We just went out there and wanted to enjoy the moment and have fun with each other," said forward Tangela Smith. "We just wanted to win and end on a good note."

"It's been a long season for us," said forward Sheri Sam. "We all would want a different outcome, but we can't change it. The season's short, and you can't afford to start slow, and I think this team learned that this year."

Provided management doesn't make too many changes in the offseason, Smith is optimistic about what the Sting can accomplish.

"We have a great team and everybody on this team could be a starter," she said. "We just need to get better chemistry next year, which we will have, and just play together and we'll be all right."



FILE PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Sheri Sam said Charlotte's slow start doomed the Sting's playoff chances. The Sting finished the WNBA season 11-23, nearly double last season's total.