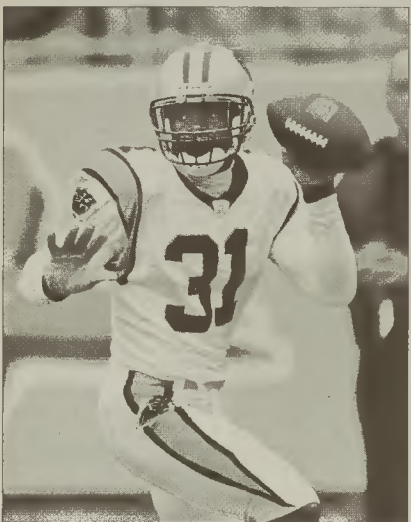


## Panthers defense makes case



Carolina cornerback Richard Marshall celebrates on the way to the end zone with his first NFL interception.

Continued from page 1C

defensive player be able to just dominate a game the way Julius is. How many times in a row is he hitting the quarterback? It's incredible."

The Panthers are in the bottom half of the NFL in total defense, but stand out in one key stat: third down efficiency. Carolina is 18th in the league in total defense at 322.8 yards per game, but is first in third down percentage at 24.6 percent.

"That's when football is fun," defensive end Mike Rucker said, "when you're out there in that zone and guys are out there having fun, getting hits on the quarterback, getting sacks, interceptions and touchdowns. That's what ball's about."

It's also helped the defenders behind the line. The revamped linebacker corps, which has adjusted to functioning without Dan Morgan in the middle, is getting to the ball faster. The secondary has also flourished in pass coverage despite nagging injuries to cornerback Ken Lucas and safety Shaun Williams.

"I tip my hat to them," said cornerback Richard Marshall, who returned his first NFL interception for a touchdown against Cleveland. "Without them, it wouldn't be (as easy) for us. Without them getting pressure on the quarterback, the receivers would have all day running and I'm glad they're able to get pressure on the quarterback and make them get the ball out faster."

## Elizabeth City State changes CIAA dynamic

Continued from page 2C

specialists Darrell Nesbitt and Eddie Montgomery were a huge loss, but the bulk of the starters are veterans.

And don't blame having a new quarterback. The Eagles have a new QB, and they haven't skipped a beat.

I hear you Falcon fans: "Why are you beating down our team? They

started 8-0 last year." But where were they in November? H-O-M-E! What's that slogan? It's not how you start but where you finish. And right now, St. Aug's is dangerously close to finishing at the bottom of the pack. That's never good news for contract extensions.

BONITA BEST is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.

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## Delaware State first HBCU to field an equestrian program

Continued from page 1C  
and practice purposes

Under the rules of NCAA-sanctioned equestrian sports, riders compete on unfamiliar horses in either the English or Western riding categories.

Of the six founding DSU team members, only Scuse will compete in the Western category, with the rest competing as English riders.

Also working with the team is Sheldon

Powell, barn manager.

"We have a beautiful facility, an amazing staff, and we're getting great horses; now we need to get more riders," Nichol said. "The way we are set up, we should be pretty successful."

The 2006-07 season will take the equestrian team to the far north, south and western reaches of the United States.

All of the meets will be away during their inaugural season.

## Fans, strangers celebrate baseball ambassador O'Neil's life and legacy

By Dave Skretta  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -

Baseballs left on a table, signed by dozens of his fans, told stories of how he touched their lives. Flowers piled up on another table near a portrait of the dapper, gregarious man who came to embody the story of the Negro Leagues.

Friends and strangers alike gathered on Saturday at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum to celebrate the life of John Jordan "Buck" O'Neil.

O'Neil died on Friday night from complications of congestive heart failure and recently diagnosed bone marrow cancer at Research Medical Center in Kansas City, said Bob Kendrick, marketing director for the museum. He was 94.

Some of the tributes talked of how O'Neil played catch with children, or never turned down an autograph

request. One had a bible verse, Matthew 25:21, that read in part, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Children and adults wandered through the museum, many dressed in the red and white Kansas City Monarchs jerseys and caps that O'Neil made famous. More than usual paused in front of a glass case that held O'Neil's first baseman's glove, a trophy inducting him into the Florida Sports Hall of Fame, and other trinkets.

"I'm going to miss him, because he was always very positive with me and was always rooting for me," Mets manager Willie Randolph said before Game 3 of New York's NL playoff series against Los Angeles.

"As a matter of fact, when I got the job, he left a voice mail congratulating me. It goes, 'Hi, Skippah. Nice goin'! I still have that on my phone, and once in a while, I just play it back with the other messages I get. It means a lot to me," he said. "He's someone I'll always remember."

O'Neil will lie in state on

Friday at the museum's Field of Legends gallery, where well-wishers can pay their respects. A private funeral and burial service are scheduled for next Saturday at a place and time to be determined, and a separate memorial service open to the public will follow.

"We lost, obviously, a great piece of not only sports history, but American history with the death of Buck O'Neil," said Kendrick, who smiled when he said O'Neil had rested comfortably during his last few hours.

"Buck was 94 years old. Buck lived a wonderful life," Kendrick said. "But Buck knew, as well as we all knew, none of us are born to live forever. The great man that he was, the great mind that he was, the great visionary that he was, he prepared us for this day."

Kendrick said he hopes the John "Buck" O'Neil Education and Research Center, to be located in a YMCA around the corner from the museum, will serve as a tribute to O'Neil.

## Compass masters crossover SUV competition for Jeep

Jeep started this whole sport utility thing decades ago but has been slow to respond to market needs. The Commander - Jeep's first true big SUV - debuted this year to good reviews and sales. It only took the company a decade to respond.

Jeep has now turned its sights to the crossover segment. The Compass is not quite the walk-off homerun as the Commander, but it's at least a two-run double.

If the Compass looks familiar it should. Jeep gives it the company's classic grill and round headlights. But it also looks like Dodge's Caliber, on which the Compass is based. It has much more ground clearance but essentially has the same shape. It's a cool design that should appeal to first time buyers and then some.

The interior is nicely sorted, but has an overabundance of plastic. It's not bad looking, but plastic nonetheless. I especially like the gauge package and how easy you can reach controls.

There's seating for five, with the option of folding the rear seats for more storage space. There are nice compartments for smaller items

and the cup holders actually hold cups in place.

The engine is a four-cylinder unit that makes 172 horsepower with 165 pounds-feet of torque. It's not the most powerful thing but gets the job done admirably. The standard transmission is a wonderfully slick five-speed. A continuously variable automatic is available but the stick is so easy it's worth teaching someone how to use.

The Compass' handling is like that of a small car - i.e. nimble with quick steering. The fully independent suspension helps with the smooth ride. It's designed primarily for on-road use but the optional 4WD will allow for light off-roading. Combined with the standard traction control it will handle inclement weather like a champ.

The base model starts at \$17,025. Add major options like air, Bluetooth capabilities, CD changer, sunroof and the like and the price climbs to about \$22,000. Go for the limited version and you get much of that standard at \$19,200.

Either way you get one heck of a bargain in a Crossover. I'd love for my college freshman niece to have one of these. The Jeep name and the cool design make this a winner.

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