

'Statement' game for Bulls

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(won) this one, and we're looking forward to going down there and winning that one. That's another big game to us. We're going to practice hard all week, and then Pioneer Bowl, here we come."

Few would've given the Bulls much of a chance for postseason play three months ago, but Smith quickly became the CIAA's surprise team. The Bulls broke a 24-game losing skid and developed a flair for dramatic, late-game heroics that have ripped the loser label from the long-suffering program. Much of the credit goes to McNeill, whose second stint at JCSU mirrors his first. As coach from 1995-96, he took the Bulls from winless to seven victories in his second season.

"It's been great to just be part of the change," said cornerback De'Audra Dix, who returned a kickoff 74 yards for a touchdown - his fourth this season - against Savannah State. "The coaches are doing a great job with us. It's just been a blessing to be a part of this team in 2006. I'm just proud to be a part of it."

Said McNeill: "It's been great because of my kids, because of the seniors. It's even more special this time because we got a lot of love for each other, but it's not about me. It's for the whole university, the way they do things. I'm elated for (JCSU President Dorothy Cowser) Yancy and the fans."

The Eagles will have something to play for as well. A win would give Central its second 10-win campaign in as many seasons and clinch the first unbeaten regular season in school history. To beat NCCU, the preseason pick to win the league championship, Smith will need to play at its peak.

"For it to be a good week for us, we've got to practice hard every day, continue to do the little things," Dix said. "If we continue to do that, everything will work out for itself."

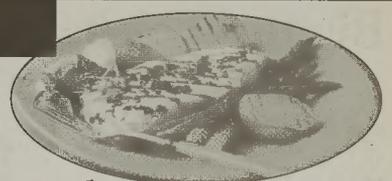
For the Bulls, that means playing for a spot in the Pioneer Bowl.

"We definitely made our statement," Bizzell said. "Coming out here and beating a D I-AA team and shutting them out... we made our statement and we've got to continue making our statement."



FILE PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

J.C. Smith tight end Eddie Minter and the Golden Bulls will try for the school's first eight-win season since 1975 Saturday at N.C. Central.



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Elizabeth City State, Virginia Union fight for CIAA championship berth

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candidate for the Pioneer Bowl should the CIAA get two teams into the playoffs or Elizabeth City State slips against Virginia Union.

Next up: N.C. Central in the Eagles' final regular-season CIAA game before stepping up to Division I-AA.

• **Elizabeth City** (8-1, 6-0):

Beat Saint Paul's 7-3 to stay in the hunt for first in the East. The Vikings are ranked 22nd in the nation in Division II and seventh in the Southeast Region, one spot out of playoff position if the postseason started today.

• **Virginia Union** (7-2, 5-1): Beat Bowie State 9-7 in Richmond. Next up is a trip

to Elizabeth City State for the East Division championship. The loser will likely fall out of Pioneer Bowl contention.

• **Bowie State** (4-5, 2-4) Bulldogs are all but done after loss to Virginia Union, although beating Virginia State Saturday would put them back at 500.

N.C. CENTRAL HALL OF FAMERS



PHOTOS/ROBERT LAWSON

Charlotte natives Eric Montgomery (above) and Gerald Patton were recently inducted to N.C. Central's athletic hall of fame last month. Both received their certificate of induction from NCCU Chancellor James H. Ammons. Patton was a four-year football starter (1982-85) and was a two-time all-CIAA first-team selection. Montgomery (1983-87) played football and was a three-year starter at center.

Par Busters win Interstate Bash

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0273.

• A team including Par Busters won the Interstate Golf Association Bash Oct. 21 at Willow Creek Golf Club in Spartanburg.

The 12-player Par Busters team finished with a total score of 60, four shots ahead of Anderson, S.C.-Athens, Ga. Asheville-Shelby finished third.



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