

# Sports

## SLAPSHOTS

### Carolina is West's best

Brian Castle  
Columnist

Unbelievable. I'm still in a state of shock after watching the Carolina Panthers defeat the San Francisco Forty-Niners 30-24 at 3Com Park in San Francisco.

The win over the 'Niners clinched the 10-4 Panthers' first playoff appearance, setting an NFL record for the earliest playoff berth by a franchise. To put the win in better perspective, one must note that the Niners have won five Super Bowls, and the Panthers have only played 30 games.

Many reasons abound for the Panthers' meteoric rise to the elite group of NFL teams in just their second year of existence. The team owner, Jerry Richardson, is a football man, going back to his days as a Hall of Fame tight end with the Baltimore Colts. Richardson runs a first-class organization with the players and fans in mind—not his ego.

The second reason for the Panthers' success is the collective genius of team president Mike McCormack and general manager Bill Polian. These two men have employed every trick of the trade to assemble an impressive array of talented players. They have tailored the talent pool to fit the designs of Head Coach Dom Capers.

Capers is the obvious choice for coach-of-the-year honors. His blend of a conservative offensive game plan that leaves room for the occasional flair of the big play and a defensive style for which the word tenacious is an understatement, has enabled the Panthers to physically destroy their opponents in the NFL's weekly battles of attrition.

Even with the NFL's most talented front office and coach, the Panther players still have to play the game to win. And most pro football analysts agree that Carolina has that one intangible that is so hard for opponents to overcome; they have heart. This motley crew of journeymen and rising stars has survived on guts and determination. Unlike the league's most hapless franchises, the Panthers back down from no one.

Sunday's victory places the Panthers into contention for the NFC West championship, and they can now challenge the Green Bay Packers for home field advantage throughout the playoffs. All they have to do is keep on keepin' on. Their plan is simple: execute the game plan of Coach Capers to the letter, follow the examples of team leaders like gritty quarterback Kerry Collins and the venerable linebacking tandem of Sam Mills and Kevin Greene, take no team for granted, and continue to play with heart, determination, and tenacity.

Who knows? The Panthers may even continue to set famous firsts: first playoff victory, first conference championship, and then ... well, I don't want to be the one to jinx them.

## Lady Bulldogs lose 55-51 at Mercer

Kyle S. Phipps  
Staff Writer

The UNCA Lady Bulldogs lost a close game to Mercer University 55-51, on Dec. 6. The loss snapped a three-game win streak for UNCA.

The Lady Bulldogs were led by senior guard Vicki Giffin, who scored 20 points and pulled down seven rebounds. The only other scorer in double figures for UNCA was freshman guard Emily Hill. Hill had 10 points and dished out four assists.

The Lady Bulldogs opened up a 14 point lead midway through the first half. The Bears of Mercer University closed the gap to eight by halftime.

UNCA shot 56 percent from the field in the first half, and held Mercer to just 31 percent from the field.

The Lady Bulldog defense pushed Mercer's offense out beyond the three-point arc in the first half. The Bears shot a lowly two-for-twelve from behind the three-point arc in the first half. UNCA's Giffin connected on the only three-point attempt for the Bulldogs in the first half.

UNCA's fortunes changed in the second half of the game. The Lady Bulldogs shooting went cold in the second half. They shot just 31 percent from the field. The Bear offense im-

proved their shooting dramatically in the second half as well. Mercer shot an astounding eleven-for-nineteen from the field, and three-for-six from three-point range.

Mercer came back to take the lead with just over two minutes remaining in the game. The Bears held on at the end to win the game by four.

The Lady Bulldogs were plagued by turnovers, and the inability to convert on forced turnovers. UNCA gave the ball away 20 times throughout the game, and the Bears converted those turnovers into 24 points. Giffin committed a game-high six turnovers.

Mercer also turned the ball over 20 times. However, the Lady Bulldogs were only able to turn those turnovers into 10 points.

Defense has been the key to the Lady Bulldog's previous success this season. Since UNCA gave up 90 points to Duke, the Lady Bulldogs haven't given up more than 60 points.

UNCA's defense is holding opponents to 58.2 points per game, and are also holding the opposition to 35 percent shooting from the field.

UNCA will start their conference schedule on Dec. 16 at Liberty University. Liberty finished last in the Big South Conference last season.

## New gym set to open in January

St. Claire Ready  
Staff Writer

The new recreational facilities at UNCA are definitely going to be worth the wait.

"What I would really like to stress is the fact that this is a recreational facility, and its primary use is for the students, faculty, and staff here at UNCA," said Justice Center Facility Manager Maggie Smith.

The new facilities will open for students, faculty, and staff on Jan. 16, 1997.

The expanded Justice Center facilities will be a chance for more interaction between faculty and students, according to Smith. "This will be a great place for that to happen," she said.

"I think that this should, and could, become a 'people center' for the campus," said Denise Snodgrass, a member of the Facility Advisory Committee.

Within the new Justice Center there are new health and fitness department classrooms, a health and fitness library, weight room, locker rooms, basketball courts, racquetball courts, a biometrics lab for fitness/nutrition assessments, and even a new track.

The facility will have a large "all-purpose" area, said Smith. This area is comprised of one large court that will be divided into three smaller courts by the use of large, hanging-mesh nets. The area will be used for volleyball, basketball, soccer, or whatever it is needed for.

Circling above and around these courts is a 200-meter suspended, indoor track. The track will be covered with a synthetic rubber, called "Mondo." This gives a little more cushion for runners and walkers. The track is also indoors, which will alleviate the urge to not exercise due to inclement weather.

The new weight room is at least three times the size of the old weight room, and much airier. Brand new, "state-of-the-art" Universal equipment will be arriving on Jan. 7, said Smith.



Photo by St. Claire Ready

The new Justice Center will be open for student, faculty, and staff use on Jan. 16. The facility includes an indoor track and racquetball courts.

Approximately \$80,000 was spent on up-to-date weight training and cardiovascular equipment, according to Smith.

Scheduling in the new facility will be aimed at accommodating those students, faculty, and staff not involved in athletics. Many students complained that the old weight room and pool were not open when they were scheduled to be open for free time.

"We will have constant open time, so the students will know when they can come use it," said Snodgrass.

Four racquetball courts will also be located in the new facility. They are connected to the all-purpose area, and easily converted from racquetball to

handball, or "wallyball," which Smith claims is a "great sport!"

There were delays in the schedule of the building, which is the main reason everyone here at UNCA has had to wait impatiently for the new facility to open.

"One of the delays was due to finding rock, while excavating," said Snodgrass. "I've never understood why they didn't know that was there."

There will also be renovations to the old Justice Center. "The weight room will become the new dance studio, and the old dance studio is going to eventually become a sports medicine area," said Smith.

## Local skiing worth a try

St. Claire Ready  
Staff Writer

Skiing out west is a somewhat difference experience than skiing here in North Carolina.

For starters, it is truly "snow-skiing," and not the traditional Western North Carolina version of snow-skiing, which is more aptly called "ice-skiing." A stumbling skier can actually fall on the snow covering the runs in places like Colorado, Utah, and California.

If a skier is unlucky enough to fall on a slope at someplace like Wolf Laurel, that said skier will have a nasty bruise from the cement-like ice encrusted on the slopes. Out west, the slopes are covered with foot after foot of soft, powdery snow. Oh yes, real snow. The difference is akin to the difference in falling down flat onto a pile of freshly raked leaves, or falling down onto a basketball court.

Another big difference in western skiing and eastern skiing is the number of snowboarders. Even though North Carolina slopes do have their share of snowboarders, it is nowhere near the snowboarding masses out west.

Standing at the lift in Snow Valley, Ca., an Atlantis Twin-Tip 144 over his shoulder, Justin Patterson of San Bernardino, Ca. commented, "New powder, and look, the runs aren't packed with skiers. Those pansies too busy with their little nine to five bogus jobs."

Lift tickets in Vail, Co. run approximately \$50.00 a day, and the lifts run from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Add to this the cost of finding a place to stay in a resort like Vail, and the price escalates into the hundreds per day.

On top of that, add the cost of flying over driving, and the price shoots into the five-digit range, easily.

For Wolf Laurel, lift tickets run about \$20.00 for the same time period. It takes about 25 minutes to drive out there, and maybe uses five dollars worth of gas. These are fairly significant price differences if you are a poor college student.

Unless you are a skiing enthusiast, who simply cannot fathom skiing anywhere east of the Rockies, try out Wolf Laurel. It's cheap, easily accessible, and if you disregard the ice, it's not too bad for the area.

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