

Panthers prowl for prey as season progresses closer to playoff time

BY GRACE EGAN

Reporter

It seems like only yesterday when the Carolina Panthers stepped onto the NFL scene with high hopes and a winning roster. It also feels almost impossible that only four years ago the Panthers walked into Reliant Stadium to face the New England Patriots, only to be defeated by a last-minute field goal. Unfortunately, the excitement was not meant to last, as fans can attest from this past season.

Opening against St. Louis, the Panthers enjoyed a victory over the Rams for the first since 2003. To some fans, their Carolina team was going to be a true contender, a force with which to be reckoned. The next week, however, against the Houston Texans, the Panthers jumped ahead 14-0, only to end up defeated in a final score of 34-21. The final blow to the now despondent team was Jake Delhomme's injury to his elbow that required extensive surgery and intensive therapy. With Delhomme out for the season,

the Panthers' season certainly looked hopeless.

Fans did not have much time to mourn, for within a week of the fateful game, head coach John Fox hired former Houston Texan David Carr as Delhomme's temporary replacement. This decision proved to be a good move, as the Panthers enjoyed a win against the New Orleans Saints. Carr proved his mettle by leading the team to a victory with the aid of kicker John Kasay.

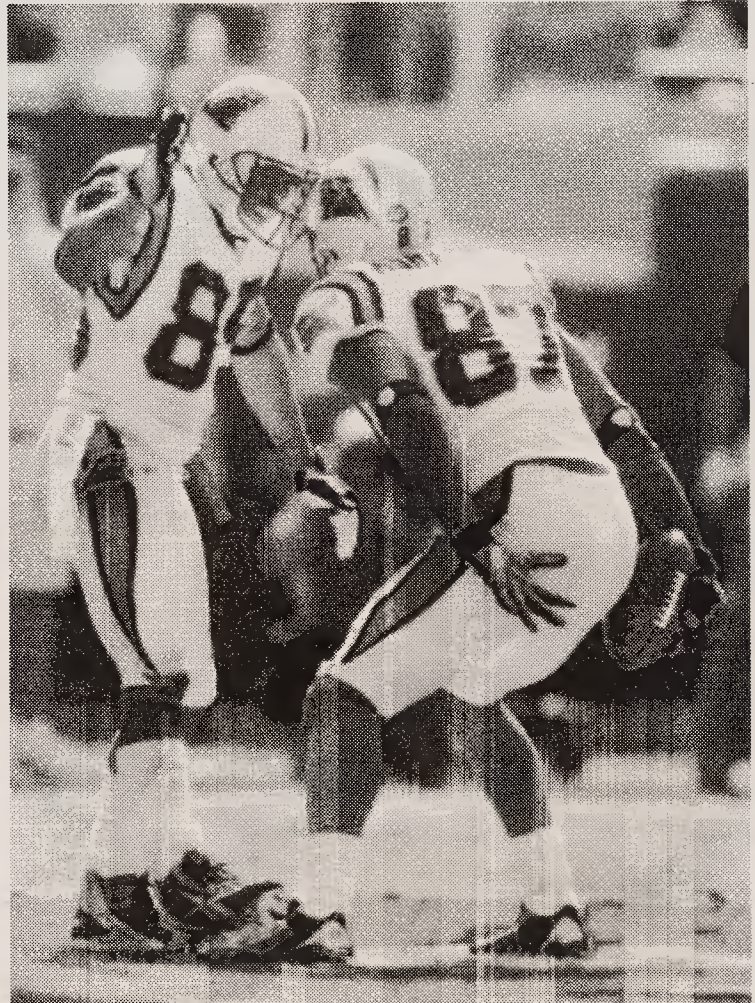
Just as the old adage says, "It never rains, but it pours," and such wisdom proved true for the Panthers' streak of bad luck. In the same winning game, Carr had his first major injury of his career. Fox was ready to pull out his backup quarterback, 44-year-old Vinny Testaverde, who led the Panthers to their first calendar year win of the season against the San Francisco 49ers, 31-14. The following game against the Jacksonville Jaguars resulted in a stunning 37-6 loss, and Coach Fox started rookie Matt Moore in the following game at home against the Seattle Seahawks.

Miraculously, the Panthers rallied to win 13-10.

Overall, the Panthers finished an average season with a total of seven wins and nine losses. Rookie Jon Beason took charge of defensive tackles for the year, and newcomer Chris Harris led the NFL in forced fumbles. On the bad side, Julius Peppers had a career low in sacks, averaging about 2.5 per game.

Despite their less than sterling performance, this season is already looking up. Carolina has four wins and two losses, and fans have been elated that Jake is finally back. Unlike last season, the team has focused on defense and being smarter with their plays.

New methods and outlooks have certainly helped the Cats in this new season. In an already unforgettable moment, Jake Delhomme threw a fourteen-yard pass to tight end Dante Rosario with 0:00 left on the clock to score their first season win. Week four saw a familiar foe, the Atlanta Falcons, back at Bank of America Stadium. But in a show of athletic



Steve Smith and Nuhsin Muhammad of the Carolina Panthers celebrate a 36-yard touchdown. *Internet graphic*

talent by Carolina (including a fifty-six yard touchdown pass by Delhomme to Steve Smith), the Falcons were sent winging back home with 24-9 loss.

Any Carolina fan can recall the fateful incident two seasons ago when the team suffered the loss of wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad because of a contractual disagreement. Muhammad played with the Chicago Bears from 2005 until he was signed on again with Carolina in February 2008. Now the familiar cries of "MOOOOSE!" ring from the seats of Bank of America Stadium once more, and Muhammad has proved that he has been an asset. In week two's game against Muhammad's old team, the Bears, he became the twenty-ninth player in the NFL

to amass 10,000 career yards with five receptions for fifty-nine yards in the game. He is also the Panthers' leader in receptions (600) and touchdown receptions (45).

Even though the season has barely begun, fans and commentators have already expressed a possibility of Carolina's success in the playoffs, and maybe even another Super Bowl appearance. In the "News and Record," a story ran, already comparing this season to the 2003 season, which was also the Panthers' Super Bowl debut. With Jake Delhomme back from injury, Muhammad's re-signing, and Steve Smith's consistently stellar performances, many believe their beloved Cats can fight their way to the top of the pile.

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Women's golf team drives way to success

Congratulations are in order for the 2008 Women's Golf Team for their outstanding accomplishments this season.

"The team capped a great regular season by winning the conference tournament and securing the season championship," said Coach Joe Franks.

They continued their remarkable season with an NCHSAA Regional Championship on Monday, Oct. 20. The following girls represented Grimsley: Morgan Cranford, Elin Hoberg, Deanna Levine, Molly Plomaritis, Lucy Shank, and Caroline Webb.

"We now head to the NCHSAA State Tournament in Pinehurst on the 27th and 28th," said Franks.

Three women earned recognition as All-Conference: