

Changes in store for '97

Continued from 1B

back-up, Johnson emerged this season, rushing for better than 1,200 yards and filling in admirably for the injured Tshimanga Biakabutuka. Biakabutuka is expected to be back full strength next year, likely pushing Johnson to a backup role again. Capers knows it may be very hard to keep Johnson around, even though he fills a very important role as captain of the Panthers special teams.

"I've got a lot of respect for Anthony Johnson and I'd like to have Anthony Johnson on this football team," Capers said. "I think he's a very valuable team member. His contribution has been tremendous and I think Anthony Johnson likes playing here."

Another key free agent is wide-receiver Willie Green. He was the Panthers' best receiver over the final half of the season after regaining the starting job when rookie Muhsin Muhammad went down with a hamstring injury. Green finished the season with 46 catches for 614 yards and three touchdowns. The seven-year veteran says it's important the Panthers keep the nucleus together.

"The key to this team is to get the guys back that are here now because we've all jelled together and we've got, I don't know, 20, 25, 30 guys who are free agents for next year," he said. "It's either going to rebuild or keep the guys that we have. I hope I'm around and we're all back because I know there's going to be some changes but the majority of us I feel can contribute well to this team next year, not only on the field but off the field as well."

The oldest Panther, 37-year old inside linebacker Sam Mills, said he will be back next

season. Mills led Carolina in tackles earned a starting spot in the Pro Bowl. Mills was also on a winning play-off team for the first time in his 11 year career, but falling a game short of the Super Bowl is

hard to take. "It hurts a lot with me because I don't know when I'll take the field again (in the playoffs)," he said. "But I plan on coming back. You never know what happens and that's why you really try to make the most of your opportunities. Believe me, I felt horrible walking off that field, knowing that I wasn't going to New Orleans."

The Panthers know they must upgrade some key positions through free agency if they want to be good enough to

advance to the Super Bowl. Speed is an area Carolina must address on both sides of the ball. General Manager Bill Polian said the Panthers would have to make significant improvement to advance to the Super Bowl.

"It's pretty hard to tell at this point in time," he said. "You lick your wound...and assess it, but I think there's no question that Green Bay was the better team, by a pretty wide margin Sunda. If we're going to play at their level and they are the benchmark, we have a ways to go."

Besides Johnson, Green and Mills, other key free agents are: Linebackers Carlton Bailey and Duane Bickett; defensive linemen Greg Kragen, Les Miller and Mark Thomas; defensive back Toi Cook; running back Howard Griffith; receivers Mark Carrier, Raghib Ismail and Dwight Stone; offensive linemen Mark Rodenhauser and Matt Elliot and punter Rohn Stark.



Mills



Green

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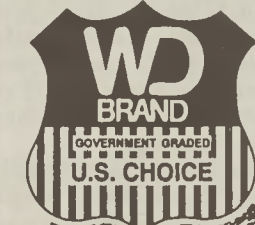
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COCA COLA "EDUCATOR" OF THE MONTH

TINA NICOLE JACKSON

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION TECHNICIAN
Management School East



An outstanding "Educator" does not have to sit in a classroom daily with children to be effective. This is the case with this month's feature, Tina Jackson. As Behavior Modification Technician, it is Jackson's duty to modify students behavior, which assist in molding new attitudes. She interacts with children constantly recommended by their home base schools.

A native Charlottean, Tina attended Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools and continued her education at UNC Charlotte, earning a BS in Criminal Justice and a BA in Afro-American Studies. She received her certification in Behavior Modification from Central Piedmont Community College.

Acknowledging her desire to influence children, she started at the bottom as a bus driver, and worker her way up. She has been with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools for six years.

This lover of children can't seem to separate herself from caring for the young, she is employed part-time with Tom Ray Residential Treatment Facility, where she is a Health Care Technician.

Tina and her 9 year old daughter, Janel attend Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church where she is very active. She is a member of the Hostess Club, Gospel Choir, Pastor Parish Relations Committee and Nomination and Personnel Committee.

**Congratulations "Tina" From
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