

# JCSU ready for case of spring fever

Continued from 13A

Charles Young, who shared the quarterback duties with De'Trell Calloway in '96, will try to earn the starting berth for himself as a senior. He'll be pushed by Keith Mack, a junior college transfer, and sophomore Bruce

Harrison.

After a 900-yard season from running back Demetrius Campbell, Smith will turn to 5-8, 177-pound Lee Scott as the top rushing threat. Although he's small and played sparingly in '96, McNeill sees Scott as a versatile back with breakaway

ability.

"He had a great offseason workout," McNeill said. "He's definitely our go-to guy going into spring and hopefully going into the fall."

Even with the changes in personnel, McNeill is excited about the start of spring drills. Going

into his third campaign, he's looking for game-breakers who can keep last year's momentum going.

"We're very excited to be getting started with the '97 season," McNeill said. "What needs to happen is...leadership from our juniors and seniors."

# Hornets goal is to break the 50-win plateau

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the bench and having confidence in all his players. It's a luxury that few coaches in the NBA have.

"We haven't proven it yet, but I have pretty good confidence that I can go all the way down all 12 guys and feel that even with my two rookies, you can get some pretty good play out of them," Cowens said. "I got two centers, two power forwards, two (small forwards) two (shooting guards) and two point guards, plus Tony Delk and Malik Rose and Tom Chambers, the old wily veteran, waiting in the wings."

Geiger's return from back surgery has added a lot to the bench, spelling center Vlade Divac for key minutes. Geiger couldn't wait to get back on the court.

"It's great to be out there. It just feels awesome to be back on the court, be a part of what's going on around here," he said. "This is the best team I've ever played on."

"I want to get back to where I'm 100 percent because it's a great feeling to be a part of something really good and that's what we got here. There's really a lot of potential to this team this late in the season."

Forward Glen Rice has had a magical season, making the All-Star team for the second straight year, being named the All-Star game MVP and winning the NBA player of the month award in February. He's third in the league in scoring, averaging 26.1 points per game. Last week he set a Hornets record for most

points in a game, scoring 48 in an overtime victory over Boston. He knows opponents will be gunning to shut him down.

"Teams are going to come out and go at me, they're going to definitely try to get me in foul trouble," he said. "I've just got to be ready to go out there and play."

If defenses try to key on stopping Rice, Charlotte can exploit other weapons.

"It's very tough to just try and key on me," he said. "If you try to just stop me, other guys on this team are going to hurt you and that's what I really love about this team."

While Rice continues to light up the opposition, forward Anthony Mason continues to be the Hornets' heart and soul. He

picked up back-to-back triple-doubles last week in wins over San Antonio and Boston and expects to get more.

"(With) the team I got, the triple-doubles, they can become average," he said. "I got a bunch of great shooters and we're still jelling, we're still finding each other and when that becomes like knowing the back of your hand, it's going to get easier and easier."

Mason feels the best is yet to come.

"As soon as I get my foot taken care of, it's going to be another level to go up next year," he said. "There's still a lot more for Mason to show, but right now we're trying to get as many wins as possible to put us in a good position for the playoffs."

# Pro leagues helps keep players on U.S. soil

Continued from 13A

She's traveled overseas to scout foreign-born players, and has her satellite dish trained toward dozens of college games on TV in preparation for the league's launching on June 21.

McKeown has welcomed scouts to Smith Center to watch his star play. He's fielded the calls inquiring about Abraham's future. And he's tried to allow her to concentrate on basketball and academics.

"There's more pressure now to play well, because there's more competition for those spots," McKeown said. "It's kind of fun for kids who were always in the shadows of the men's game to say, 'Hey, I had someone look at me from the Knicks.' But I just tell her don't be too concerned. If you go out and win, more people will notice."

"But I get calls and letters from agents every day. We've made a decision to deal with all that after the season. We have to make sure the problems the men's game has don't evolve into the women's game. There's too much money involved."

Blazejowski says she does not consider the entry of agents into the women's basketball scene a problem. "I remember when there was just one agent representing everyone who placed players overseas," she said. "We're a ways off from having a problem with the money."

The WNBA, which includes the Charlotte Sting, has set its schedule before the start of play in June. The first 16 players signed by the league, including recent college stars Rebecca Lobo, Lisa Leslie and Sheryl Swoopes, already have been assigned to the eight teams. A

pre-draft camp will be held in April for unassigned players and college seniors. The league's first draft will be held April 28, and teams will hold local tryouts in May to fill the remaining roster spots.

The pro leagues' future also includes current college freshman and sophomore stars. For now, the ABL and the WNBA have policies stating that they will allow only players who have completed their college eligibility to participate. But such policies also used to exist in men's professional sports. And the potential opportunity for a future pro career already has entered the minds of young players.

"My dream has always been to play professionally, [even if] that meant going overseas," said North Carolina State freshman guard Katie Smrcka-Duffy. "I

had hoped there might be something here, but I was prepared to go [outside the United States] for a few years. I love the game that much."

Washington Post correspondents Kathy Orton and Shawn Cox contributed to this report.

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# Mills inks final deal with the Panthers

Continued from 13A

ers' off days, and he has been a tireless worker on behalf of a number of charities in the Charlotte area.

"He has been a leader on the

field, in the locker room and in the community," coach Dom Capers said. "To many people, he has come to represent the spirit of the Panthers."

Carolina last month signed Micheal Barrow, an unrestricted

free agent from Houston, to play alongside Mills. The Panthers hope that when Mills retires, Barrow will take over his duties of calling the signals for the defense on the field.

# NCAA tournament awaits 49ers

Continued from 13A

Georgetown, seems a natural matchup.

"A big physical team with a bunch of quick guards," he said. "I think they like to press and get up and down, so that's kind of our style too. We got me and Alex down low. I think it will be a good matchup and a good game."

Johnson would have rather stayed closer to home.

"I wish we could have been on the east coast but you know we got to go out west and we got to be ready to play once we go out there," he said.

Junior point guard Sean Colson has had his ups and downs this season but came on strong in the C-USA tournament despite dislocating his shoulder. Colson said things were looking bleak on Sunday when the team was watching the selection show on TV and didn't see their name announced until the next-to-last pairing.

"We were just looking at the brackets and seeing where everyone else was going and I was pretty much just really waiting," Colson said. "My heart was beating so fast, then when we came up I was just so happy."

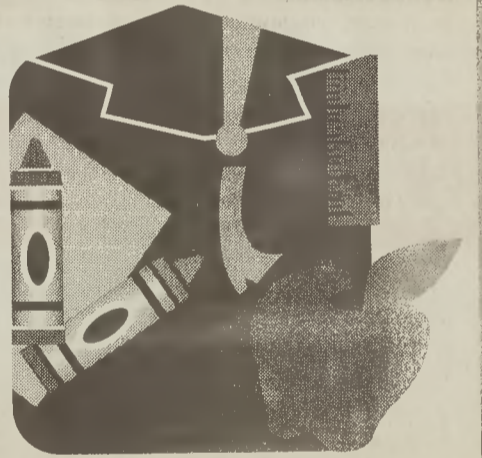
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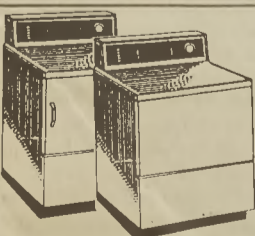
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