

# Bulls put recruits, hopes on the line

By Herbert L. White  
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Johnson C. Smith's 2004 football recruiting class addresses its most pressing need - offensive linemen.

Seven of 11 players signed by the Golden Bulls are offensive linemen, an area long hampered by a lack of depth. With the loss of four starters from last season's 1-9 team, Smith suited up four linemen during spring drills, which forced coaches to switch players from other positions.

Smith's other need area, receiver, got some depth with the signing of three wideouts, including Brandon Benjamin of South Carolina 4A power Orangeburg-Wilkinson High. Smith's top returning receiver, redshirt freshman Marquis Belton (North Mecklenburg High) was named to the CIAA's all-freshman team and led the Bulls with 39 catches.

Smith had one of the league's least-productive offenses in 2003, ranking at the bottom in points scored, total yards and yards rushing. The Bulls were also mistake-prone, finishing at the bottom in turnover ratio.

South Carolina produced the most recruits with four, followed by Georgia (three) and North Carolina (two).

Please see GOLDEN/2C

## ALL-STAR EFFORT



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Victory Christian's Sean Tucker defends against Mike Corpening at the Charlotte All-Star Classic last week at Queens. Tucker was named MVP. Tucker's West team beat the East 80-69.

# Ross' postseason of opportunities and honors

## Queens all-America holds his own at NBA pre-draft tournament

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Queens guard Spencer Ross was one of 64 collegiate players invited to the Portsmouth Invitational Tournament last week in Portsmouth, Va.

Ross scored 31 points over three games in which his team went 2-1. He hit 13-of-25 shots during the tournament.

"Spencer will obviously be a professional basketball player because of his God given ability, tremendous work ethic and passion for the game," said Queens head basketball coach Barclay Radebaugh. "He has earned the right to compete with the very best players in the country. He has unique abilities."

Ross has amassed a long list of accolades in two years with the Royals, but none more prominent than being named NCAA Division II Player of the Year by The Basketball Times.

Ross was earlier selected to the Daktronics Division II Second Team All East Region team as well as earning Carolinas-Virginia Athletics Conference Player of the Year honors.

"Spencer is deserving of every award he

Please see ROSS/2C

## CIAA SPRING CHAMPIONSHIPS



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Johnson C. Smith long jumper Britni Dash will try to help the Golden Bulls move into the upper echelon of women's track and field at the CIAA spring championships in Charlotte.

# Challengers look to topple league powers

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Will the CIAA's dominant programs get a challenge at this week's CIAA spring championships in Charlotte?

As usual, St. Augustine's men's track program appears invincible, but the other sports could produce surprises. The most intriguing could be men's tennis, where five-time champion Johnson C. Smith had its 75-match CIAA win streak snapped by Shaw last month.

• Tennis (starts Thursday at Horner's Nest Park; finals 8 a.m.)

Johnson C. Smith is out to win a school record sixth

straight men's championship and secure a second straight trip to the Division II playoffs. But the Bulls won't have an easy path if they face much-improved Shaw.

Shaw (13-2, 9-1) used the regular-season win over Smith to fuel the Bears' drive for a East Division title, but the Golden Bulls (18-9, 13-1) have regrouped and clinched the West championship.

• Track and field (starts Friday at Irwin Belk Complex, JCSU; finals Saturday at 10 a.m.)

St. Augustine's, a national power led by U.S. Olympic coach George Williams, is aiming for another sweep in men's and women's competi-

tion. Both look to be primed for a repeat should the Falcons' top athletes participate instead of skipping to prepare for next week's Penn Relays in Philadelphia. Johnson C. Smith, which has overhauled its women's program with an influx on local talent, is looking to break into the upper echelon. The Golden Bulls have won three meets, including the Freeman Invitational April 3 at Livingstone. Smith is particularly strong in sprints, where freshmen Porcia Douglas (Butler High) and Aisha Lide (Harding) lead the Bulls.

St. Augustine's men have

Please see CIAA/3C

Shaw's Tanesha Haynes (22) and her Bears teammates will try to repeat as softball champions while N.C. Central (in white) is out to avenge last year's tournament loss.



PHOTO/WADE NASH

C. JEMAL HORTON



# College game OK without NBA teens

Can we finally stop all the complaining about teen-aged boys jumping directly to the NBA?

Please?

Can we now, at long last, acknowledge that college basketball will be all right if the high-school prodigies continue to bypass late-night study sessions and indigestion for the benefits of playing for millions?

If you paid any attention to this year's NCAA men's basketball tournament, then you already know the college game is just fine. The story lines are still pretty engaging. The college heroes still do exist.

Some of the experts pushing their own agendas - personalities who make money analyzing the college game (see Dick Vitale) and the coaches at the major Division I schools - love to talk about what a travesty all the NBA defections have created.

Are you kidding me?

There's no way you'll convince me the 2004 NCAA tournament would have somehow been better if LeBron James had signed with, say, Ohio State, rather than inking his \$100 million deal with Nike last summer.

The image of injury-plagued Connecticut center Emeka Okafor leading his team to the national championship was the best story of this year's tournament. Okafor will graduate college in three years, and he'll do so with a 3.8 grade-point average. Here was a kid who was considered a project when he entered college. Now, he's the Most Outstanding Player of the tournament. If that kind of story doesn't show people the college game still is special and that it still creates heroes, then I don't know what will.

But Okafor's story wasn't the only great one of the tournament.

Who will forget the picture of Oklahoma State point guard John Lucas III hitting the game-winning shot against St. Joseph's in a regional final, then running into the stands and jumping into his dad's arms?

What about the story of Georgia Tech reserve guard Will Bynum a week later? Bynum, a transfer who barely found a new school to give him a scholarship after he transferred from Arizona two years ago, drove for the deciding basket against Oklahoma State and propelled the Yellow Jackets to the championship game.

The story of Luol Deng, who emerged from war-torn Africa to carry Duke to the Final Four, was an inspirational story, too. Actually, there were so many other great stories, so many other college stars born during this year's March Madness.

Who needs the prodigies in the college game?

Now, let me clarify: I don't have a problem with the prodigies going directly to the NBA. Why should anybody, other than perhaps their parents, have a problem with it? And here's a news flash: A kid's opportunities to go to college do not

See NCAA/3C