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SPORTS

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Section

I've got answers for every question

This week, several of you - OK, three of you - stopped me to ask my thoughts on certain issues going on in the sports world.

I figured I'd take the time to answer a few questions in a public forum.



C. JEMAL HORTON

Question: Assuming Charlotte lands the No. 3 pick in this year's NBA Draft, and assuming Andrew Bogut and Marvin Williams are off the board, should the Bobcats draft Wake Forest's Chris Paul, North Carolina's Raymond Felton or Illinois' Deron Williams?

Answer: I know Paul and Felton are sort of local kids, but Williams is the best point guard in the draft. At 6-foot-3, 210 pounds, he has the size and power, and he generally thinks pass first. He is a complete guard in the mold of Jason Kidd, except he can shoot, making 36 percent of his 3-pointers last year. And he is a much better defender than Paul and Felton.

Question: Can the Carolina Panthers' second-round pick Eric Shelton be a good replacement for Stephen Davis at running back? Answer: Maybe it's just me, but I wonder if an inability to maintain a good playing weight is going keep Shelton from being a franchise running back.

He's listed at 246 pounds but looks heavier. I still think DeShaun Foster is the best option after Davis.

Question: What do you think of this talk about race playing a factor in Steve Nash winning the NBA's Most Valuable Player Award? Answer: Let me start by saying I don't have a problem at all with Nash winning the award. He's worthy. It's not as if he were a bum this year.

That said, I would have voted for Shaquille O'Neal. I just don't think enough credit is being given to Nash's teammate Quentin Richardson for helping the Phoenix Suns improve. Richardson added an all-important outside shooting threat to the Suns, plus the team finally had star Amare Stoudemire healthy for the entire season.

Shaq meant everything to the Miami Heat, even though he had All-Star Dwyane Wade as a sensational sidekick. But to answer your question about race: I honestly don't know. However, I'm not naive enough to believe that race COULDN'T have played a role. Remember a year or so ago, when Larry Bird said on national television that the NBA needed more white superstars because "the majority of fans are white America"? I think a lot of people, including those voting for MVP, agree with Bird's assessment.

So it wouldn't shock me at all if, years from now, we find out that a lot of people voted for Nash to win because of the color of his skin.

Let's not be silly and think the NBA somehow is immune to the ills that plague the rest of society, folks.

Question: Do you think it's just a coincidence that home runs in Major League Baseball have declined just as the sport implemented a

See YOU'VE/2C



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Charlotte Sting head coach Trudi Lacey gestures during a drill Tuesday in Fort Mill, S.C. The Sting play Los Angeles in a preseason game today at 6 p.m. at the Bobcats Basketball Center.

Measured steps

Rebuilt Sting tries to get acclimated in preseason

By Herbert L. White herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Preseason basketball isn't about wins and losses. What I want to evaluate from my team is what we're doing well or not doing well so I (can) recognize what we're not doing well so we can come back and improve on that.

The Sting will have to improve quickly. Five players remain from last year's team that missed the

playoffs, and all-time leading scorer Andrea Stinson wasn't re-signed. This year's newcomers include rookies Jessica Moore and veteran acquisitions Sheri Sam and Helen Darling.



Sam

See STING/3C

"What I want to evaluate ... is what we're doing well or not doing well."

Charlotte Sting head coach Trudi Lacey



JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY

Johnson C. Smith football coach Daryl McNeill (second from right) congratulates Pettis Norman Award winners Jennifer Lee, Justin Jackson and Brandi Young. The award is given to JCSU's top male and female athlete.

3 JCSU athletes earn Norman Award

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Johnson C. Smith held its annual athletics award ceremony in which Jennifer Lee, Brandi Young, and Justin Jackson earned the Pettis Norman Award.

The award is given to the top male and female athlete for the academic year.

Lee, a freshman tennis player who possesses a 4.0 grade point average, was also named JCSU and CIAA rookie of the year and JCSU most valuable player.

Young, who shared the award with Lee, is a junior communication arts major. As the heart and soul of the softball team, Young led the nation

in triples and slugging percentage. She was named first team all-CIAA and JCSU most valuable player.

Jackson, a senior sport management major was the team MVP in football. He also garnered the most defensive award, second team all-CIAA, all-region and was a Don Hansen Football Gazette preseason All-American.

In his senior year, Jackson had a 4.0 grade point average.

Michael White (tennis) and Melanie Harrison (basketball) received the Coca-Cola Academic Award given to the seniors with the highest grade point average.

Other most valuable award winners:

- Men's basketball - Charles Clark
Women's basketball - Lauren Goss
Football - Justin Jackson
Men's cross country - John Fulton
Women's cross country - Tiana Pope
Bowling - LaQuanda Higgins
Softball - Brandi Young
Men's tennis - Michael White
Women's tennis - Jennifer Lee
Men's outdoor track - Larry Moore
Women's outdoor track - Brittni Dash
Cheerleading - Aisha Lide
Men's golf - Christopher Parker
Women's golf - Rochelle Rose
Volleyball - Bettina Murray (coaches award)

Knights' time yet to come

By Herbert L. White herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Charlotte Knights manager Nick Leyva can actually find something good to say after a poor start to the season.

For instance, the Knights are 4-5 in their last nine game, nothing to get excited over, but consider where they started. Finding consistency - especially among the pitchers - has helped, but 9-23 suggests more needs to be found.

"They're working hard and they're at the point now where I think they sometimes put pressure on themselves," Leyva said.

Leyva is concerned about Charlotte's slow start on offense. Center fielder Brian Anderson, Charlotte's cleanup hitter, leads the Knights in batting average (.330 to start the week), doubles (10) and second in homers with five. Second baseman Felix Martinez has been consistent hitting eighth, but the Knights aren't hitting with runners in scoring position. Although Leyva isn't fazed, he acknowledges some Knights are pressing to break out of their funk.

"We're five weeks into the season and when you continue to struggle, you want to do something different instead of staying within yourself and doing the things that got you to this point in your career."

The pitchers are struggling, too, but are showing some signs of pulling things together. Brandon McCarthy, who was in single-A ball last year, is 4-3 with four quality starts. Charlotte's other starting pitchers, however, are a combined 4-17 with two quality starts. If and when the pitching improves, Leyva says, the hitters need to be ready to support them with runs.

"I think our starting pitching is going to See KNIGHTS/3C

LeBron's good, but he's not the main man yet

Forget Bobby Fischer, I have been searching for LeBron James.

I looked on TNT the other night, while all those teams were playing NBA playoff games, and I couldn't find him.

And even when I flipped over to ESPN, the other cable network broadcasting post-season games these days, LeBron was a no-show.

This just in: For the second year in a row, LeBron is not in the playoffs. You won't see him this time of year. Unless, of course, he's making a guest appearance in the stands to watch one of his friends perform.

So can we please stop treating him as if he's the best player on the planet now?

Goodness!

Here's the thing: LeBron, certainly a celebrated player with the Cleveland Cavaliers, isn't even the best player in his second-year NBA class. At least not now. That distinction belongs to either Miami Heat star guard Dwyane Wade (who gets my vote) or Denver Nuggets standout forward Carmelo Anthony.

How could I reach such a decision? It's easy. It's about winning. It's about the playoffs. And as LeBron has been home for the NBA's postseason for two consecutive seasons now, Wade and Anthony have gone two-for-two in playoff appearances.

Don't try and tell me that Wade is only a playoff regular because he has Shaquille O'Neal on his team. Everyone knows this is O'Neal's first season in Miami, and last year Wade led a near-upset of the Indiana Pacers in the first round of the playoffs, while teaming with the likes of the under-achieving Lamar Odom and a 6-foot-9 center named Brian Grant.

And although Anthony's Nuggets clearly See LEBRON/2C



C. JEMAL HORTON



James

