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Section

SPORTS



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Charlotte 49ers hammer thrower Brandon Wyatt was a sprinter when he left for Iraq. A shoulder injury after an insurgent attack helped lead him to field events upon his return to school.

Commitment to duty, country and recovery

Throwing helps 49ers Wyatt heal wounds

By Eric Bozeman
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Brandon Wyatt can't run from the scars of service to his country. But he's found the strength to cope.

The Charlotte senior was severely injured in a 2004 convoy attack in Iraq that ended his career as a sprint-

er. He clearly remembers the day his life turned upside down.

"Our convoy was attacked, we went off the road and I tore a lot of muscles in my shoulder," Wyatt said. "It felt like my shoulder had partially popped out, so I had a little bit of nerve injury."

The Army started Wyatt's rehabilitation immediately, but another tragedy struck.

See THROWING/2C

Suns, Heat slumping No. 2 seeds

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Phoenix Suns won a division title, though Steve Nash didn't see much on the court to celebrate. Instead, he sent a warning to his team.

So did Pat Riley, who doesn't like what he is seeing from his division champion Miami Heat.

Clearly, the Suns and Heat have more in common than just being No. 2 seeds — if Miami even holds onto its position.

Phoenix won the Pacific Division for the second straight year, but couldn't do it on its own terms Sunday. The Suns lost 116-114 at Seattle and had to wait for the Clippers to lose to the Lakers before they were officially champions.

Nash had 13 points and 11 assists in 30 minutes, and was disappointed afterward in the team's approach to the defeat, which dropped Phoenix to 8-9 in the last 17 games.

"If we don't change our attitude and our commitment throughout a game, we're really setting ourselves up for the harsh realities that we've seen," Nash said.

At least the Suns have no chance of losing their No. 2 seed. That's not the case for Miami.

After falling 93-84 to Orlando for their second straight home loss, the Heat was only 21/2 games in front of New Jersey for the second spot. And Riley was hinting at changes so his team could stop the slump.

"It's almost a crossroads for me right now, to find the competitive warriors and the competitiveness of those guys will transcend the talent and reputation," Riley said. "I'm going to try to find the guys who are going to try to play the hardest and best in support of our two great players."

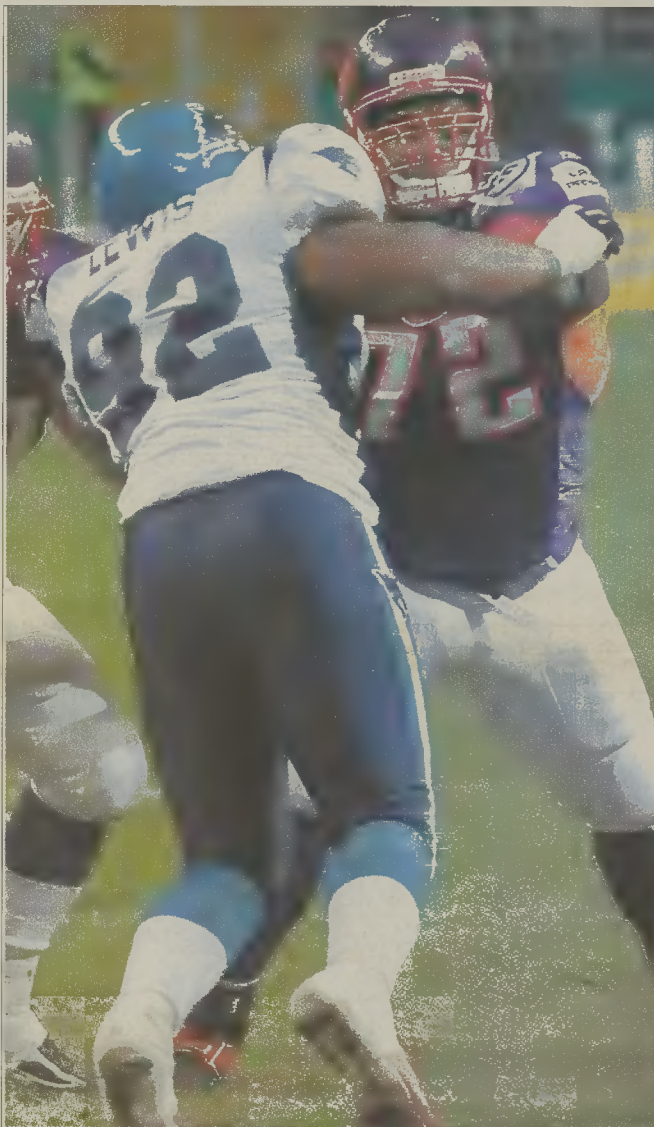
At Miami, the Heat's only lead was 2-0, and there were few contributions beyond the 27 points from Dwyane Wade and 16 points and nine rebounds from Shaquille O'Neal.

Miami lost for the sixth time in 11 games.

But before they worry about the postseason, the Suns have to fix their defense.

The Suns have lost three of four, and have allowed 110 or more points in five of their last eight games.

"We didn't make shots and, to be honest, tonight we weren't very smart and we were pretty soft I thought at times," Nash said. "We really weren't that competitive for stretches of the game. It's frustrating, we all have to look at ourselves and try to get better and be more competitive throughout the game."



PHOTO/WAYNE PAULO.COM

Former N.C. A&T standout Qasim Mitchell is adjusting to NFL Europe. He's learning to play guard as well as acclimating himself to a different culture.

A different world

In NFL Europe, culture shock gives way to opportunity

By Herbert L. White

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Frankfurt, Germany is a long way from Jacksonville, N.C.

But that's where Qasim Mitchell's NFL dream has taken him.

The 6-foot-6, 330-pound Mitchell, who grew up in Jacksonville and played college football at N.C. A&T, is a

guard with NFL Europe's Galaxy. Culturally, he's had to make some adjustments.

"It's a whole different atmosphere," he said. "I'm like 8 feet tall and everybody drives like 100 miles an hour because they've got the Autobahn. The only thing we have in common is McDonald's, Burger King

and KFC."

And football, which is why Hampton's Zuriel Smith is playing with the Rhein Fire. The former Hampton standout is trying to make a comeback after two years away from the NFL. Being far from home was difficult at first, he admits.

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NFL Europe history

First season: 1991, with 12 teams.
2006 teams: Six — Amsterdam Admirals, Berlin Thunder, Cologne Centurions, Frankfurt Galaxy, Hamburg Sea Devils, Rhein Fire.

Alumni in the NFL: QB Jake Delhomme and RB Jamal Robertson, Carolina; QB Kurt Warner, Arizona (Super Bowl MVP), RB Maurice Hicks, San Francisco.
HBCU players on 2006 rosters: 19.

Bonds isn't fazed by struggle

Season-opening slump is offset by Giants' success

By Janie McCauley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Barry Bonds can live with low batting numbers and no home runs as long as his teammates keep producing.

He remains stalled at 708 career home runs one week into the season, not yet even coming close to hitting one out of the ballpark.

"It's all right. I'll turn it around," said Bonds, seven homers shy of passing Babe Ruth's 714 and 48 away from breaking Hank Aaron's mark of 755. "I ain't hitting anything."

Bonds was 2-for-12 for a .167 batting average. On Sunday in a win against Atlanta, his biggest contributions were scoring a run and making a sprinting catch on a high fly by Chipper Jones near foul territory in shallow left.

"I'll take a 2-for-the-rest-of-the-season as long as we win the World Series," Bonds said, standing by his corner locker after the game. "I have not swung the bat well in the past and the team has won games. There are times you're going to be a big part of it and times you're not going to be part of it. ... It's just fun to win. I'll be fine."

See BONDS/3C



Bonds

SPEEDING INTO ROCKINGHAM



IHRA PHOTO

Harold Martin, one of the top drag racers in the country, will try for his second IHRA win of the season April 21-23 at Rockingham Dragway at the Nicko's NY Style Pizza Spring Nationals. He won the season-opening Speedtech Winter Drags at South Georgia Motorsports Park.

Sting re-signs Sutton-Brown, extends Mazzante

By Herbert L. White

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The Charlotte Sting is keeping a couple of its young core players.

The WNBA team re-signed center Tammy Sutton-Brown and exercised the fourth-year option on guard Kelly Mazzante through 2007.

Sutton-Brown, originally picked by Charlotte with the 18th overall pick in the 2001 draft, averages 9.2 points, 5.6 rebounds and 1.4 blocks while shooting .485 (516-1065) from the field in 163 career games. In 2005, she averaged 9.4 points and finished sixth in the league in field goal percentage shooting .509 (111-218) from the field, 11th with 5.3 rebounds and 19th with 1.09 blocks.

"We are thrilled to have Tammy back with the Charlotte Sting," said General Manager Trudi Lacey. "She has been an integral part of our team for the past five years and has continued to make improvements in her game to become one of the top centers in the league. We have

See WNBA/2C



Mazzante