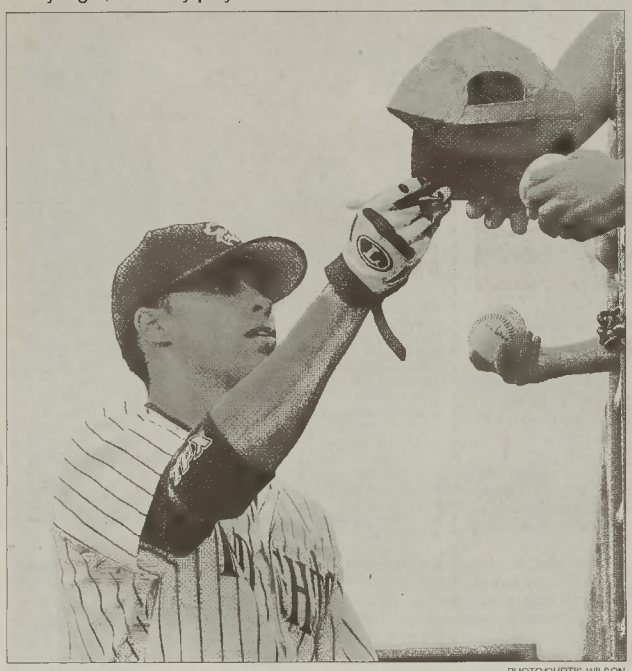
"These guys come in here to play every night, and they play for 27 outs."

Charlotte Knights manager **RAZOR SHINES**



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Charlotte outfielder Jerry Owens signs baseballs and caps for fans before a game at Knights Stadium. Charlotte is tied for the best record in the International League and more than doubled its five wins from April 2005.

Knights make right with April power

Charlotte off to fast start with IL's best record

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

FORT MILL - These are not 2005's Charlotte Knights. Not by a long shot.

After losing 86 of 140 games last season, the Knights have opened 2006 on a tear, storming to a 13-6 mark through Tuesday, tied for best in the International League with Scranton Wilkes-Barre. Charlotte is a game ahead of Durham in the IL's South Division. To put it in perspective, Charlotte won five games all last April, and didn't break double-figures until halfway through May.

Shines

Young

The changes are obvious, starting with manager Razor Shines, who emphasizes all-out aggression as the key to success. It's rubbed off on the players, who have become adept at late-inning heroics, like a come from behind 6-3 win over Toledo that pushed Charlotte into the division lead last Friday. Ernie Young's three-run blast to left in the bottom of the ninth inning capped the Knights' comeback from a 3-1 deficit in the seventh. It doesn't hurt that 14 Knights played for Shines before their call-up to AAA Charlotte.

"These guys come in here to play every night, and they play for 27 outs," Shines said. "When you play that way for 27 outs and there's an opportunity, we're going to seize it and get back in the ball game."

That's the way Charlotte approaches every game: get in front and stay there with pitching, or stay close enough to make a game-turning charge.

"It's contagious," Shines said. "When you send one guy to the plate and he refuses to give in, all of a sudden you see guys following the lead of the previous hitter. When that happens, sooner or later something is going to happen."

Finally.

LION SIGNS WITH WINSTON-SALEM

PHOTO/WADE NASH

West Charlotte High senior Steven Mason signed a national letter of intent to play golf at Winston-Salem State last week. Mason is the first participant from the Charlotte First Tee program to earn a college scholarship. First Tee provides instruction and mentorship to aspiring golfers from underrepresented communities.

Picture perfect: Kodak to sponsor Bristol in NASCAR Dodge series

SPECIAL TO THE POST

Eastman Kodak Company will sponsor Chris Bristol of High Point in the Drive for Diversity driver development program, which is endorsed as NASCAR's leading on-track diversity initiative.

Bristol will pilot the No. 99 Kodak Chevrolet for Ken Schrader Racing in the 2006 NASCAR Dodge Weekly Series.

Bristol, a native of Columbus, Ohio, was chosen after qualifying in the annual Drive for Diversity Testing and Evaluation Combine, where potential drivers compete for opportunities in the Drive for Diversity program. Kodak has sponsored a team since the program began in 2004.

Terms of the sponsorship were not disclosed.

Bristol earned a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from N.C. A&T in 1999. He began his racing career at age 11, competing in 80cc motocross cycling events sanctioned by the American Motorcycle Association.

A veteran of the NASCAR Goody's Dash Series, Bristol joined the Joe Gibbs/Reggie White Driver Development Program in 2004, earning rookie of the year honors in Caraway's Late Model Stock Car Division. In 2005, he became the first African-American to win a race and lead the point standings at Hickory Motor Speedway, earning three victories, 15 top 10 finishes and three pole positions during the track's 17-race season.

"Drive for Diversity is a terrific next step in my racing career, and Ken Schrader's guidance from years of Nextel Cup racing experience is a real benefit to my development as a driver," Bristol said. "I'm excited to have Kodak as my sponsor, and we're looking forward to doing great things together in the Dodge Weekly Series."

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Les Birdies Golf Club of Charlotte
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Annual Golf Tournament
June 24, 2006

The Tradition Golf Club
3800 Prosperity Church Rd
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Shot Gun 8:00 am

Captain's Choice

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Schedules & Fees

7:00 am - Registration & Hospitality
8:00 am - Shotgun Start -- Captains Choice
Lunch, Awards & Prizes

Individual Entry Fee - $75.00
Includes:
Green Fee, Cart Fee, refreshments, Lunch & Gift pack

Mulligan - $10.00

Team Awards
1st Place
2nd Place
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Longest Drive
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Hole -In- One (Keffer Volkswagen)
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Les Birdies Golf Club of Charlotte

Les Birdies Golf Club

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Player 2
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City _____ State _____ Zip _____
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Player 3
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