

Sting playing for next season

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gave away. You get frustrated."

In a season of disappointment, there is optimism. Charlotte improved its win

total by two games over 2005 with four games left. As a team, the Sting has shown potential to be more competitive, albeit erratic.

"This has been a process

where I feel I'm getting them to understand what my philosophy is," Bogues said. "We've just not been consistent enough carrying it all the way through. We've got

to have a little meanness, a little toughness on our side in terms of when we need that stop, we've got to get that stop, no matter who it is on the floor."

Golden Bulls eye first win in three years

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ent about this year, and the last?

For starters, McNeill knows what's needed and could address it through recruiting. Although he treated his list of signees like it's a national security matter, McNeill brought in 14 transfers - an unheard-of haul for JCSU - and four high school recruits. If the new guys pan out, the Bulls will be better. How much is anyone's guess.

Is Marquis Belton still Smith's best player?

Yep, but he'll be pushed by running back Marco Kirven, who showed in spring prac-

tice he's capable of dominating. Belton, a senior receiver from Charlotte, is a preseason all-CIAA selection and is one of the league's best when he has the ball. Trouble is, receiver is probably the most team-dependent position on offense.

That's why sophomore quarterback Carlton Richardson has to emerge as a close second for Belton to be all-conference at season's

end. What will be a surprise? Kirven. The transfer from Southwest

Baptist was 13th in Division II in rushing in 2003 with 122.9 yards a game.

He showed breakaway ability in spring practice, something Smith has lacked in recent years. A plodder he isn't, which is critical for Smith, which produced just 743 rushing yards last year.

Can the defense keep games

manageable?

That's a concern with linebacker Chris Nelson graduated. Smith was decent last year but was betrayed by a balky offense, which averaged 10 points and 212.1 yards per game. The best players are defensive tackle D.J. Haynesworth, a preseason all-CIAA defensive end and safety Steve Williams. Linebacker Omar Bizzell is capable of putting up all-conference numbers.

So what's the bottom line? Upgrades all around should deliver a couple of wins. The CIAA title is still a long way off.



Belton



Richardson



PHOTO: WADE NASH
New Orleans Hornets guard and Salisbury native Bobby Jackson looks for an opening during his annual summer camp and all-star game at Livingstone. Jackson signed with New Orleans last month.

BASEBALL

Lee focused on Rangers to playoffs

By Stephen Hawkins
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Carlos Lee is focused on helping the Texas Rangers now. The All-Star slugger isn't thinking about what might happen after this season when he can become a free agent.

"That's one thing I don't really worry about," Lee said Saturday, a day after being traded from Milwaukee in a six-player deal. "I've got to go out and do my best, do anything I can to help the team win games I just play."

The Brewers traded their best player after it became apparent he wasn't planning to stay past this season. An NL All-Star in both of his seasons in Milwaukee, Lee turned down a four-year extension reportedly worth \$48 million on Thursday.

"A lot of things happened in the process that couldn't work out ... a lot of stuff that happened that didn't really work out the way I wanted," Lee said, without elaborating.

Trying for their first playoff appearance since 1999, the Rangers added an impact bat in the first major deal completed in the days leading up to Monday's non-waiver trade deadline.

But general manager Jon

Daniels made it clear after completing the deal that his desire is to have Lee for longer than just the remainder of this season.

"He's potentially at the peak of his career. It seems like he's gotten better each year. A lot of things are aligned for this guy to be how he is for a while," manager Buck Showalter said. "We'd love to have him around, but right now we're focused on the last eight to 10 weeks of the season."

The 30-year-old Lee hit .286 with 28 home runs and 81 RBIs in 102 games for Milwaukee, already his fifth straight season with at least 25 homers. He is a .284 career hitter over eight seasons with the Chicago White Sox (1999-04) and Milwaukee (2005-06).

If he was a free agent, Lee said he "wouldn't mind" playing in Texas or other teams in warm climates. He owns a 100-acre ranch outside of Houston.

The Rangers sent reliever Francisco Cordero and outfielders Kevin Mench and Laynce Nix, and minor league left-hander Julian Cordero - no relation to Francisco - to Milwaukee. Minor league outfielder Nelson Cruz also went to the Rangers, and was added to

their major league roster.

"It feels good that you know that a lot of people are counting on you. I don't see that as pressure. I see that more as a challenge," Lee said. "I'm here and I'll be up to it. I don't expect anything but the best from myself."

Lee went 2-for-4 in his Texas debut Friday night, with singles up the middle in his first two at-bats after arriving at the stadium with a police escort only about 35 minutes before the start of the Rangers' 11-3 loss to Kansas City.

"I'm a lot more relaxed today," Lee said. "Yesterday was a crazy day. It turned out to be a crazy game. Hopefully, every thing settles down."

After being the designated hitter and batting fourth in his Rangers debut, Lee was in left field on Saturday night against the Royals and batted third between Michael Young and Mark Teixeira. Lee was 3-for-4 with a walk, a double and a run scored in the Rangers' 5-3 loss.

Showalter planned to talk with Lee after Saturday's game about whether to routinely bat No. 3 or 4 in the lineup. Lee does prefer playing in the outfield, which Showalter was glad to hear.

"He wants to play defense,

not fall into that DH role," Showalter said.

Cruz started Saturday night, batting ninth and playing right field. He struck out on three pitches as a pinch hitter in the ninth inning Friday.

Police call Bonds attorney when they're in legal trouble

By David Kravels and Paul Elias
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — He might be as self-assured as his client, and Barry Bonds' attorney is no stranger to big cases.

The former U.S. Marine and police officer ridiculed the government's steroids investigation last week, saying prosecutors didn't have enough evidence to indict a ham sandwich, let alone Bonds. He has accused U.S. Attorney Kevin Ryan and his deputies of engaging in an obsessive witch hunt.

"I've never deviated," Michael Rains said, "from the amount of contempt for them, by the way they've treated Barry."

Known for his aggressive legal tactics, the 56-year-old Rains regularly defends cops accused of misconduct.

"If you're a police officer, I think Mike Rains is the guy you want representing you," said John Burris, an Oakland attorney who sues police officers for brutality and has tangled with Rains in court.

In Bonds, one of professional baseball's greatest sluggers, he has found his highest-profile client.

Prosecutors think the San Francisco Giants outfielder might have lied under oath when he reportedly told an earlier grand jury he never knowingly took performance-enhancing drugs. They're also looking into whether Bonds failed to pay taxes on proceeds from the sale of memorabilia.

One grand jury's term expired in mid-July without issuing an indictment, but prosecutors quickly convened a new panel that began interviewing witnesses last Thursday.

Rains says he landed Bonds as a client through a mutual acquaintance, Dan Molieri, a boyhood friend of Bonds and a former South San Francisco police officer.

Most of Rains' work defending police officers

has been in California trial courts. But Bonds' case, should he be indicted, would be handled by the federal court system.

Two people close to Giants chief operating officer Larry Baer say he has urged Bonds to get additional legal counsel. They spoke on condition of anonymity because of the secretive nature of the investigation. Baer did not respond to attempts for comment.

Rains said anyone who thinks he's unfit to represent Bonds is just envious. "They just think they should be representing him," Rains said.

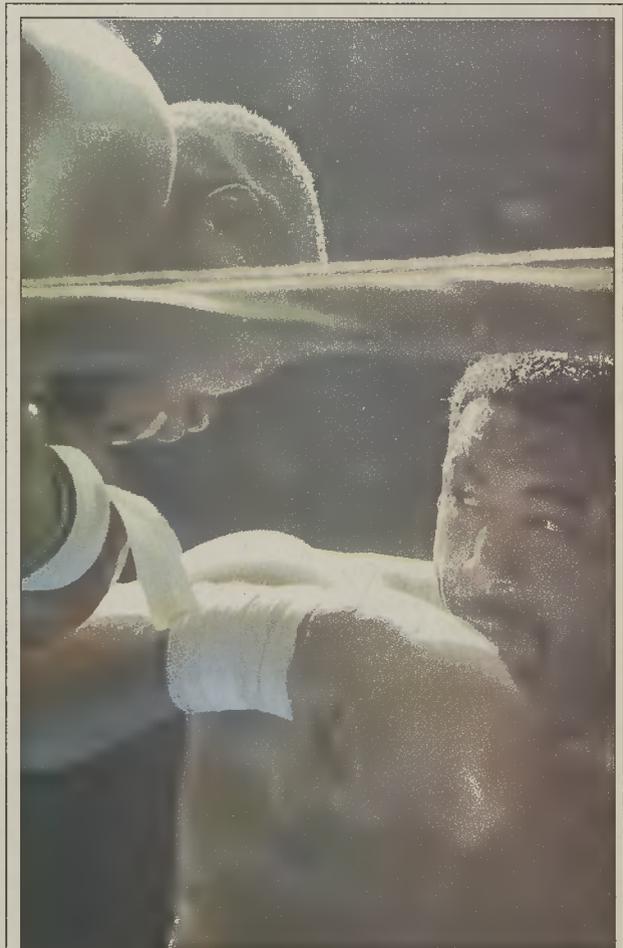
In fact, he scored one of his biggest professional wins in a Fresno federal court when he and other attorneys won an acquittal in the high-profile prosecution of eight Corcoran State Prison guards accused of staging gladiator-style fights between inmates of different races in 1994. The trial was the subject of intense media scrutiny, including coverage by CBS' "60 Minutes" newsmagazine.

"It took me one day to dismantle the entire government case. I have no fear of being in federal court," Rains said.

Rains also defended Clarence "Chuck" Mabanag, one of four Oakland Police officers dubbed "The Riders," who were accused in 2000 of regularly beating and framing suspects and covering it up by falsifying police reports.

Three of the officers, including Mabanag, were tried twice. Both cases resulted in mistrials after jurors deadlocked in trials that were heavily covered by the media. Alameda County prosecutors decided against staging a third trial.

Terry Wiley, a 16-year veteran of the Alameda County District Attorney's office who was Rains' adversary in the second Riders trial, said Rains is a "versatile" attorney who can change his litigation strategy to fit the tenor of each trial.



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