

Receiver looks to follow dad, brother

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hard," he said. "You have to put in that much more effort than someone else and I think that I've carried that with me all the way up to this

level." For Metcalf to make the Panthers, he's going to have to put forth maximum effort, because Carolina is deep at receiver. With the offseason

signing of Keyshawn Johnson and the improved play of Drew Carter and Keary Colbert coupled with superstar Steve Smith, competition is heavy.

But Metcalf said that he brings a lot to the table that can help the Panthers make a run for the Super Bowl. "I bring speed, a deep threat and good hands and a

good route," he said. "I'm a good blocker and I'm a balanced receiver all the way around." If making the team means changing positions, Metcalf

said he's willing to do it. "Any way (I can contribute) I'm willing to do it," he said. "I feel like I can compete at this level and I'm right here so I have to knock the door down."

From players to schemes, it's an extreme makeover at JCSU

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"A majority of our kids we're depending on the first couple of games are definitely the kids who've been in our system a year," he said. "What we've been able to do is put them in with some good junior college guys, some D-I transfers who know the game. Blitzing is blitzing, catching the football is catching the football, running the football is running the football. You just give them things they can do right now and gradually bring them along."



Puryear

There will also be changes on the sidelines. McNeill brought in seven new assistant coaches, and promoted Eric Puryear from defensive backs coach to defensive coordinator. Puryear scuttled the 4-3 scheme in favor of a 3-4 set that relies on the linebackers' speed. McNeill, who'll run the offense, brought in more speed to spread the field.

"Offensively, it was a matter of getting (receiver) Marquis (Belton) some help," he said. "Defensively, it was changing our scheme to a (scheme) which best fits the linemen we have and best fits the great linebackers we have who can run to the football. You can't win averaging 10 points a game unless you have a great defense."

Smith's losing streak, which started in 2003, isn't a motivation tool, McNeill said. Few of this year's players have been around for all 24 losses, and McNeill wants them focused on the present.

From two to three years ago, you only have two or three of those guys left, so it's been a complete turnover, a complete makeover," he said. "Our motto is 180 degrees - a complete turnaround. We're going to start from the bottom and make our way to the top, and I think that's what we're going to do."



Johnson C. Smith head coach Daryl McNeill watches the Golden Bulls run in an agility drill. McNeill expects as many as 95 players to participate in preseason camp.

Sting rookie class looks back and ahead after adjustments

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season. "I didn't really know what to expect," said Fluker. "Ever since I was younger when I first started playing basketball, I wanted to make it in the WNBA, so it's a dream come true, but it's a different brand of basketball."

"It's just a learning experience knowing this is now my job. In college, I'm playing for a national championship, and getting my education at the same time. Here this is my job, and they're expecting me to play at a certain level every night."

Fluker, who saw the least amount of playing time of the three rookies who suited up for every game, said she met her own goals and expectations by being willing to learn.

"Anytime I was called on I would try to work hard, better my game to fit in with the style of play in the WNBA, and I think I did an OK job of that," she said.

Head coach Muggsy Bogues said the rookies played well and added depth.

"As far as contribution, it's been huge for us," he said. "I'm just pleased to see their development and looking forward to seeing them when they have a year under their belt entering next year."

Currie, who's averaging 25 minutes and 10 points per game, is also looking forward to next year, after making the sometimes rocky adjustment to the WNBA. Though similar in length, the pro schedule was more strenuous, she said.

"Early on it was hard, especially playing back to back games, and the travel, it wears on you," said Currie. "But your body gets used to it, and it's ready whenever you need it."

Not only is the schedule more compressed, but the players no longer have academic responsibilities, which Currie felt made for a

somewhat easier adjustment. "That helps a lot. You have a lot of free time to rest and take care of your body, and it takes a lot of other pressures off of you."

Knowing what to do with that extra time was important to the adjustment at the next level," Bond said.

"You just have to know when to get your rest and everything...you can't be out all night. I think I adjusted well," said Bond.

Beyond the external changes, Bond, averaging 18 minutes, 5 points and 2.5 turnovers per game, felt her first season went as expected.

"Pretty much the first season was what I expected: competitive, aggressive, physically and emotionally," she said. "I tried to just go out there, leave it all out there on the court all the time, play hard and stay focused."

Though Bond's WNBA expectations were met, the season didn't quite come together the way Currie expected.

"We definitely didn't do as well as we would have liked to have done. I think I've developed as a player and I think this team keeps developing," said Currie. "I'm really looking forward to working on my game in the off-season and playing next season."

And the off-season, according to retired WNBA veteran Andrea Stinson, is important to their development.

"It's all about learning," she said. "You come in as a rookie and you're learning the game of basketball over again. You're playing with girls that have been playing basketball 10, 12 years professionally and you come in and you just have to learn and get better."

"I think the rookies here have so much potential, once they get built for being in shape for the WNBA," Stinson added. It's all about being in shape and getting that veteran experience, and they'll get the experience overseas, and I think they'll come back next season ready to go."

The rookies and the Sting will play their last game of the season at Bobcats Arena, on Saturday at 6pm against the Chicago Sky.

Hornets games in New Orleans

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national team is playing a pair of warmups for the World Championships in Japan later this month.

"We ultimately decide where their games will be scheduled," Stern said. "The

following years, our plans are for them to play 41 games in New Orleans."

Before the Hornets, Oklahoma City had never had a major-league franchise, and fans strongly supported the team. The Hornets sold

out 18 of their 36 games at the Ford Center, with average attendance of 18,717 - considerably higher than the average attendance in New Orleans.

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