

C

Section

SPORTS

Felton predicts playoffs again

By Joedy McCreary
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHAPEL HILL — Raymond Felton is back in the prediction business.

The guard, who as a rookie last season predicted that his Charlotte Bobcats would make the playoffs, did it again this month — but with a big if. His key teammates must stay healthy.

"I'm still going to stick to it, no matter what," Felton said. "We have that type of talent, and I have that much confidence in my team."

Speaking at the Smith Center — the arena where he became a college star — Felton didn't back down from last year's bold prediction that Charlotte would reach the postseason.

Plagued by injuries all season, the Bobcats won their last four games to finish 26-56 — well shy of a playoff berth. Emeka Okafor missed the final 49 games with a chronic ankle injury. Sean May played in just 23 games after undergoing two knee surgeries and leading scorer Gerald Wallace missed 27 games with various injuries.

"My thoughts are still the same. I feel that if Gerald and Emeka would have been there with me ... Sean would have been there and Emeka would have been there, we still would have made the playoffs last year," Felton said.

"So I definitely know that this year we will, if we keep all those guys healthy," he added.

Felton, the point guard on North Carolina's 2005 national championship team, was picked fifth overall by the Bobcats and became a starter midway through the season. He averaged 11.9 points and 5.6 assists, and was named rookie of the month in the Eastern Conference for three straight months from February-April.

Now, Felton has several trips scheduled to his old college town.

The Bobcats are playing two preseason games at the Smith Center: Oct. 17 against the Washington Wizards and

Please see FELTON/2C

Road thrill

Golden Bulls perfect away from campus home



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Johnson C. Smith receiver Marquis Belton has scored three touchdowns for the Golden Bulls — all on the road. JCSU (3-1, 1-1 CIAA) is unbeaten away from Charlotte going into Saturday's conference game at St. Paul's.

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

There's no place like away from home for Johnson C. Smith's Golden Bulls.

Last week's five-overtime 40-37 win over Virginia Union moved JCSU to 3-0 in road games this season. The key?

"We're focused," said cornerback De'Audra Dix. "It's about being focused and knowing that it's going to be a tough environment for us to win on

the road."

"Right now, we're just taking one game at a time," said

receiver Marquis Belton. "After we finish with these two games on the road, we have three at home. Dix

so I think we can show everybody we can win at home as well."



Smith's road success (3-1, 1-1 CIAA) has already helped the Bulls top their win total for the previous three seasons combined. The Golden Bulls squandered a 21-point first half lead, fell behind twice in overtime, then finally pulled ahead for good on Yannick Murray's 22-yard touchdown run.

"We say every play is a big play," Dix said. Coach Daryl See ON THE ROAD/2C



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Marc Davis, 16, earned six wins and five second-place finishes at Hickory Speedway in the NASCAR Limited Late Model series.

Success puts racer on fast track to upgrade

Davis, 16, won a third of 18 starts at Hickory Speedway

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Marc Davis is aiming to follow his historic summer with a strong autumn.

Last week, he drove in GM Busch series development tests with other young NASCAR prospects at Caraway Speedway in Virginia. Davis had the best cornering speeds in the bigger, heavier Busch car prepared by Richard Childress Racing.

"It's a whole different beast with more horsepower," he said.

Davis, 16, had a historic summer, winning six times in 16 starts at Hickory Motor Speedway in NASCAR's Limited Late Model series to become the second African American to win there. Davis, a Mitchellville, Md., native, is in his first year with Joe Gibbs Racing through the Driver for Diversity program, a racing development program for women and ethnic minorities. Drive for Diversity supports eight drivers in the Dodge Weekly Series and 12 crewmembers in the Busch and Truck series.

"The diversity program is a real source of pride for all of us at Joe Gibbs Racing," said J.D. Gibbs, president of JGR. "Thanks to (the late pro football hall of famer) Reggie White's vision, our diversity program was the first to be founded and the first to win races. It's a pro-

Please see BREAKTHROUGH/3C

Hosley wins Tee to Green title

Tim Hosley won the Tee to Green tournament Sept. 23-24 at Riverbend Golf Course in Shelby.

Hosley fired a two-round total of 144, a shot ahead of Chris Hamilton and four better than Harold Varner.

The foursome of Mitchel Humphries, Josh Queen, Randy Horton and Charles Maynor won the Boys and Girls Club tournament Sept. 22 at Cherokee National Country Club in Gaffney, S.C.

The foursome finished with a total net score of 52, a couple of shots better than Scott Cline, Richardson Garret, Hunter Hughey, Trip Edwards.

Herbert L. White

Braves sitting this October out

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — The ending was inevitable, but no less painful for the Atlanta Braves.

Right up until the end, they held out hope of somehow making it back to the playoffs — albeit as a wild-card team rather than a division champion.

But their bid ended a full week before the end of the regular season, leaving a meaningless homestand for a team already looking ahead to 2007.

"The way the season's been going, even though we didn't want to think we were out of it, it would've been tough," Andrew Jones said. "Guys didn't stay healthy. Not doing the right job, not playing good defense, not hitting when we need to hit, not pitching where we should pitch."

"It's been a season like that."

The Braves had not missed the playoffs since 1990. The following season, they went from worst to first to spark a run of 14 straight division titles, unprecedented for a major U.S.

See SUBPAR/3C

POINT AFTER

Pats and Cats square off in classic rematch

Records, pride on line for Southwestern 4A rivals Independence and Providence

BEST GAME: Independence of Providence. The Panthers have waited a year for this game. Now that it's here, what will they do against the Patriots, who have owned the Southwestern 4A all these years?

Last year's game was a classic, with Providence roaring out to a big lead, only to have

Independence storm back to win at the wire. That game, as much as any, propelled the Patriots to their sixth straight N.C. 4A title. Neither team has forgotten that.

Independence is coming off its best showing yet, a 44-0 pasting of Weddington. Providence couldn't have been looking past South Mecklenburg in a 20-15 win last week, could it?

BEST BET FOR A RECOVERY: East Mecklenburg. The Eagles went down

for the first time this season in a 28-20 loss to Myers Park. Ardrey Kell's (1-4) first-year program should provide the perfect tonic.

NEXT BEST BET FOR A RECOVERY: Olympic. The Trojans lost a heart-breaker to Charlotte Catholic, but Harding High shouldn't be too tall a hurdle for Olympic. The Trojans are playing good defense and the offense is diverse, which should help them cruise on Friday.

RYAN'S HOPE: Butler tailback Ryan Houston keeps adding to his Mecklenburg County touchdown record. The senior pushed the standard to 74 last week after a three-touchdown effort against Ardrey Kell, and it could've been more if the Bulldogs hadn't gone to the bench early in the third quarter.

Up next for Houston and Butler: Weddington, which didn't show much defensive muscle last week against Independence.



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Providence High and running back Steven Hatley (24) escaped South Mecklenburg with a 20-15 win last week. On Friday, the Panthers take on Independence.