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SPORTS

Section

Brock of ages

Charlotte native's goal is to unify boxing's most lucrative — and muddled — division

By Herbert L. White
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Calvin Brock's goal is to clean up boxing — at least the heavyweight division.

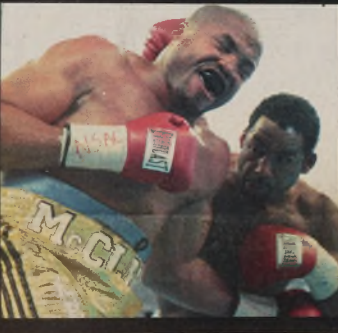
Brock, a Charlotte native, will take on Wladimir Klitschko of Ukraine Saturday in New York for the IBF and IBO world titles. For Brock, a former Olympian, stepping between the ropes at Madison Square Garden is the first step in consolidating the heavyweight belts around one waist.

"That's the ultimate dream, starting Saturday," he said.

Klitschko (46-3, 41 knockouts) won't be a willing participant. At 6-foot-6, he's the tallest opponent Brock (29-0, 22 KO) has faced. Klitschko, who won the title with a seventh-round knockout of Chris Byrd in April, also has the power to end fights quickly.

"I brought in taller sparring partners" to approximate Klitschko's height and reach, Brock said. "Everybody's been a punching bag for him. I'm not going to

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Calvin Brock of Charlotte (right) will fight Wladimir Klitschko for the IBF and WBO heavyweight titles Saturday at Madison Square Garden. Brock emerged on the heavy-weight radar last year with a win over Jameel McCline (left).

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS

Baker eager to get back in dugout, perhaps with San Diego Padres

By Janie McCauley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO - Dusty Baker would like nothing more than to be back in the dugout as a manager next season — and he might get his wish with the San Diego Padres.

Baker is set to interview with Padres general manager Kevin Towers and other team officials on Monday about becoming the successor to Bruce Bochy, who last week left San Diego to take over as skipper of Baker's former club in San Francisco.

Baker, whose contract was not renewed last month after four years managing the Chicago Cubs, has been working in television since the season ended and hoped he would hear from teams about job openings.

"It just happened," Baker said in a phone interview Thursday night. "You've just got to play it out and see how it comes out. It's a good organization and a good team in a very good city. I think it's a great opportunity. It all depends what everybody wants and it all depends what the motto for the organization is."

Baker appears the most qualified of any of San Diego's candidates — he's the only one with major league managing experience. He left the Giants after taking them within six outs of the World Series title in 2002, his 10th season with the club.

Baker's Cubs struggled with injuries this season and finished 66-96, the worst record in the National League. In his first season, the Cubs came within five outs of reaching the World Series.

The Padres have won back-to-back NL West titles, losing to the St. Louis Cardinals in the first round of the playoffs the past two seasons.

"This would be the best team I've inherited from the beginning," Baker said. "I took over the Giants after they had a losing season and I took over the Cubs after they had a losing season."

The Padres interviewed Los Angeles Angels pitching coach Bud Black, who lives in San Diego and pitched at San Diego State, on Wednesday and he is considered a top candidate.

St. Louis Cardinals third-base coach Jose Oquendo interviewed on Tuesday and Trey Hillman, manager of the Japanese team Nippon Ham Fighters, on Thursday. Giants bench coach Ron Wotus was set to interview Friday and former Dodgers hitting coach Tim Lincecum on Saturday.

Hillman's interview with the Padres was so impressive that he is expected to meet in Japan with San Diego owner John Moores and CEO Sandy Alderson, who are accompanying a

Please see BAKER/2C



PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

Johnson C. Smith's Elijah Ashley (23) and Ed Wilson stop N.C. Central's Greg Pruitt Jr. in NCCU's 52-7 win in Durham. The Golden Bulls finished the regular season 7-3, their best record since 1996.

Golden Bulls sit tight for bowl invite

Pioneer still a possibility for 7-3 JCSU despite loss at N.C. Central

By Herbert L. White
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The only thing Johnson C. Smith can do now is wait for Nov. 17.

That's when CIAA Commissioner Leon Kerry will pick the league's Pioneer Bowl representative to face a team from the SIAC. The Golden Bulls, who finished the regular season 7-3 after a 52-7 loss to N.C. Central in the finale, are in contention, as is 7-3 Virginia Union. Elizabeth City State (9-1), which plays Central in the CIAA championship game, is a possibility should the Vikings not get a bid to the NCAA Division II playoffs.

"You don't want to go out like that," Bulls all-CIAA linebacker Ed Wilson said. "Hopefully, we'll get a bid for the Pioneer Bowl, but if not, we had a great year."



Wilson

After breaking a 24-game losing streak, the Bulls won seven games for the first time since 1996, a startling turnaround for a program that had been a perennial bottom-feeder. But instead of clearing out lockers, the Bulls will prepare to go bowling.

"We're going to be fine," head coach Daryl McNeill said. "We'll just hang back. That's all you want to do. You don't want to be able to lobby for nothing. Whichever team deserves it, that's who they're going to give it to. Right now, we've just got a wait and see game, but we're still going to do the things we've got to do to get better."

Smith's formula for success, which depended on limited revenue, Please see BULLS/2C

PIONEER PULSE

Upstart Elizabeth City State holds key to bowl invitation

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Around and around the Pioneer wheel goes, where it'll stop no one really knows.

Johnson C. Smith's chances of representing the CIAA took a hit last week in a 52-7 drubbing at N.C. Central. The good news, however, is the Golden Bulls play in Charlotte, which is where the Pioneer Bowl will be contested. Dec. 2, CIAA

Commissioner Leon Kerry wants better attendance to boost the game's bottom line, and Smith has a student body, alumni and the Carolinas' largest city to draw from. The bad news? Elizabeth City will have a better record regardless of what happens in Saturday's CIAA championship game against N.C. Central. As for Elizabeth City, the Vikings are as much a feel-good story as Smith this season. ECSU wasn't expected to contend for the East Division, but rolled through its league schedule undefeated.

This week's results:

• N.C. Central (10-0, 7-0). Eagles aren't likely to be sent to Charlotte. The CIAA's only undefeated squad plays Elizabeth City in the championship game in Durham Saturday. Then it's off to the Division II playoffs.

Elizabeth City State (9-1, 7-0) Great regular season for the Vikings, who capped it with a 29-21 win over

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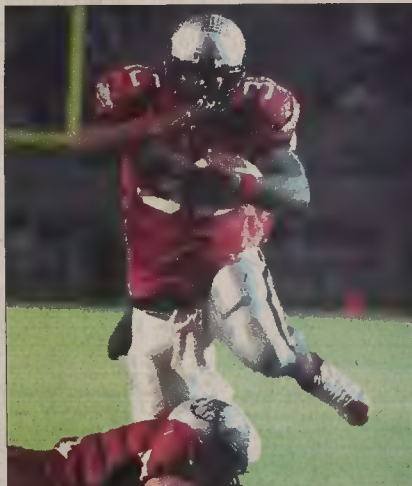


PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

Ryan Houston and Butler High will try to leap past Scotland County Friday in the first round of the N.C. 4AA playoffs.

First round seedings usually follow form in high school playoffs

This is why, Bill Parcels once said, football players lift all their weights.

It's high school playoff time, arguably the most exciting month on the amateur athletic calendar. There'll be intrigue, a sprinkling of upsets, and yes, a lot of hurt feelings. But at the end of the road, eight

champions will be crowned from four different divisions, which is way too many, in my estimation. I like four in four — that way you know the absolute best without a doubt. Of course, the NCHSAA, which sanctions public school athletics in this state, sees the larger field as a larger revenue stream, too.

On to the games at hand. Mecklenburg County has its usual large contingent of 14 schools. Just think. A few

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