

# C

## Section

### N.C.'s top programs play right here

The one thing that's pretty obvious from this year's high school playoffs: Mecklenburg County and the Southwestern 4A in particular, is head and shoulders above the rest of the state.

Three county schools are in the 4AA West Region final four, with Providence, Butler and Independence in the running. Everyone knows about



HERBERT L. WHITE

Independence, which has 104 consecutive wins and six straight state titles. Butler has one of the state's best running backs in Ryan Houston. But who would've

thought Providence?

Richmond County, the gold standard before Independence's reign of excellence in N.C. football, didn't see the Panthers coming. The Raiders, who waved a gaudy 12-0 mark like a flag in the breeze, had the wind taken out of their sails by Providence in a 27-0 beat-down Friday. The Panthers beat Richmond County in every phase, leaving no doubt as to who had the superior team. In fact, that was the first shutout the Raiders endured since 1995.

**BEST GAME:** This one's easy: Providence and Butler. The Bulldogs knocked off previously unbeaten Greensboro Grimsley to advance against Providence, which is feeling pretty confident after spanking Richmond County. There's also a good tailback battle to check out in Providence's Corey Darrington against Butler's Ryan Houston.

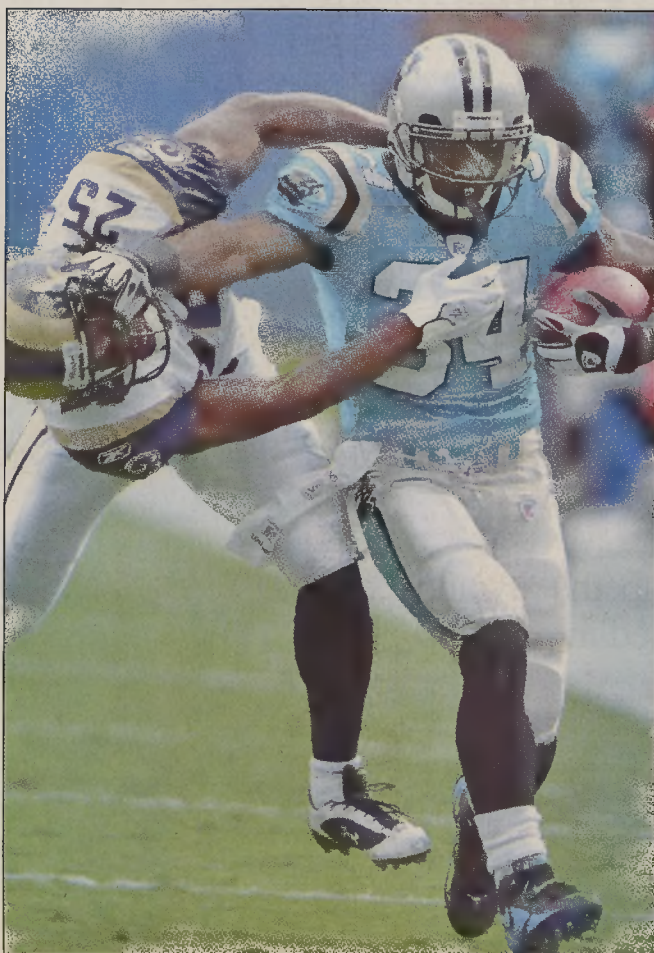
All things being even, look for Providence's passing attack, featuring the sure-handed Dominick Magazu. This has the potential to be highly entertaining.

**'STAYIN' ALIVE:** West Charlotte believes, so it must be true. The Lions are in the final four in the West 4A bracket after dismantling Crest 33-20 on the Chargers home field.

West Charlotte, the No. 7 seed, played perhaps its best game of the season in upending No. 2 Crest, which hadn't allowed that many points in a postseason game since 1996. The Lions did it with their ground game and defense, the hallmarks of their success most of the season.

The reward is another opportunity at an upset, this time against East Gaston, the No. 3 seed.

# SPORTS



PHOTOS/WADE NASH

Rookie running back DeAngelo Williams took over for DeShaun Foster Sunday against St. Louis when Foster hyperextended his elbow.

## Depth perception

New starters stepping in and up for Carolina's departed

By Cherie F. Hodges  
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The Carolina Panthers are in first place in the NFC South.

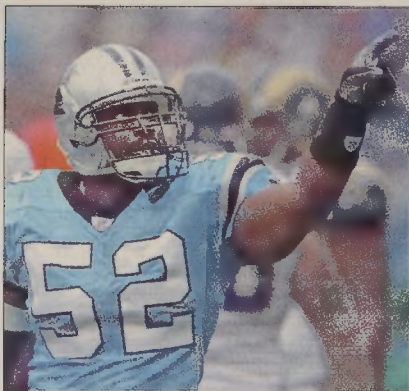
But it's not the usual suspects giving the Panthers the push they need if they're to make the playoffs: it's the replacements.

Middle linebacker Chris Draft took over for the injured Dan Morgan. Right tackle Jeremy Bridges took over for Travelle Wharton and Thomas Davis took over at outside linebacker for Will Witherspoon, who left for St. Louis via free agency. Rookie running back DeAngelo Williams is adding big running plays, subbing for DeShaun Foster.

Bridges said coming to the team he knew he didn't have a grace period, he was expected to hit the turf running.

"They basically told me to get

See PANTHERS/3C



Chris Draft took over at middle linebacker for Dan Morgan in Week 1. Draft said the Panthers struggled to integrate six new starters on defense, which left them 4-4 two weeks ago.

Tuskegee Golden Tigers  
PIONEER BOWL  
J.C. Smith Golden Bulls  
December 2, Memorial Stadium

## Bulls prep for center stage

After 2 weeks of waiting, JCSU reopens camp

By Herbert L. White  
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For 11 days, all Johnson C. Smith linebacker Ed Wilson could do was wait.

When the Golden Bulls' regular season ended Nov. 4 with a loss at N.C. Central, Wilson and his teammates would gather for informal workouts and talk about their chances of getting a bid to the Pioneer Bowl against Tuskegee Dec. 2 in Charlotte.

Was 7-3 JCSU in? Or would it be Virginia Union, which had an identical record but better conference mark despite a loss to the Bulls?

"Anxious is not the word," Wilson said. "It's like a kid waiting at Christmas. What am I going to get? It was sitting on the edge of your seat. It was hard."

But JCSU is in, and the Bulls are preparing for their first postseason game since the 1970 CIAA championship game and first bowl game since the 1941 Florida Bowl. After nearly two weeks of inactivity, they're

Please see GOLDEN BULLS/2C

inside: Tuskegee's coach learning on the job. Page 4C

### HANG TIME



PHOTO/COURTIS WILSON

Johnson C. Smith freshman center Jerome Davis goes up for a lay-in during the Golden Bulls' 95-86 loss Saturday to West Virginia State in the Wendy's Tip-Off Classic. The Bulls (1-1) next play Nov. 24-25 at the Bluefield State Classic in Bluefield, W.Va.



PHOTO/WADE NASH

N.C. A&T's Chaz Truesdale (left) and Andre Garth celebrate after an Aggies touchdown against S.C. State Saturday.

## Longest season in N.C. A&T history leaves Aggies blue

By Herbert L. White  
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N.C. A&T football coach Lee Fobbs has seen just about everything, but never a season like this one.

The Aggies closed out the first winless campaign in school history, capped by a 41-19 thumping by arch rival S.C. State last week in Charlotte.

"This is my 35th year in coaching and if you've been in it long enough, you experience all of it," Fobbs says. "As the days get older and when I sit around the fireplace I'll be able to tell them I've seen a 0-11 year, I've seen some undefeated years, I've seen some nine- and 10-win years. So why not mix one of those in there? That's just coaching. That's just football."

Aggies football wasn't very good in 2006. Over 11 games, A&T (0-11) scored just 108 points while giving up

476. A&T's lack of experience showed in nearly every facet, especially on offense, but Fobbs isn't totally surprised.

"The positive thing is I won't be able to sit in front of you guys next year and say we're not an experienced football team," he says. "That's the one thing I wanted and expressed to all the coaches. We're playing kids who this time last year might have been playing in high school playoffs but right now, they're in college football. It's been a great year for experience for them."

Fobbs, who was hired in the spring, didn't have a full recruiting season. Now, his attention turns to bringing in players who can contribute immediately and grow this year's newcomers into a winning core group.

See AGGIES/2C