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## Section

# SPORTS

## Va. Union faces shortage of games

Virginia Union is in desperation mode.

That's going to spell either good news or bad news for the rest of the conference.

The Panthers were scheduled to participate next weekend in the three-day Los Angeles-based Black College Hoops Classic, but the event was cancelled due to a shortage of funds. That leaves Union three games short on its 26-game schedule.

The teams coach Dave Robbins' crew were scheduled to compete against in Los Angeles won't travel to Richmond, Va., unless they get all expenses paid, Robbins told the Richmond-Times Dispatch. Yeah right. Union wouldn't pay for its own teams' expenses if it didn't have to.

Robbins thought he had found one team, but after the Panthers mauled Bowie State 87-42 a few weeks ago in the Big Apple Classic, that team wussed out.

The bad news - for the league - is that at 5-0 and 18 games left, Union can't lose more than three regular season games. That would put them at 20-3 and for some strange reason, 20 is the first number the NCAA Division II selection committee looks at.

If the Panthers, the three-time defending CIAA champions, do lose more than three games, they would then have to run the table during the CIAA tournament for a certain playoff berth. The champion receives an automatic bid.

That's a lot of pressure on any team, but especially when you're competing in the best D-2 conference in the country.

So, worst case scenario is Union loses three regular season games, then tears through the tournament like a runaway bull. Or the Panthers lose more than three, take an early-round tourney exit and miss the playoffs, which, of course, would be good news for everybody else. Which one are you betting on?

### Baseball needs hosts

USA Baseball, which is building a national training center in Cary is seeking host families for its 2007 USA Baseball Tournament of Stars June 18-25 tournament. June might seem like a long way off, but as those of us over 30 can attest, it will be here before you can say summertime.

The TOS is one of the most elite high school baseball tournaments in the U.S. Some of the nation's best ballplayers will compete on eight teams named after youth baseball groups: AAFC, American Legion, Babe Ruth, Dixie, PONY, NABF, RBI and USA Baseball. Players from this group will be selected by USA Baseball to its Junior (18-under) National Team that represents the U.S. in international competition. Some famous JNT alumni are: Alex Rodriguez, John Smoltz, Paul Konerko and Mike Mussina.

Seventy-two host families are needed and extensive background checks will be performed. E-mail info@usabaseball.com for more information.

BONITA BEST is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.



PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

The Carolina Panthers didn't need to rely on the passing attack last week against Atlanta, but may have to call on receiver Steve Smith against New Orleans Sunday with a possible playoff berth at stake. The Panthers need losses by New York Giants and Green Bay and a win against the Saints to slide into the postseason at 8-8.

## Still in the hunt

By Mike Cranston  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Last week the Carolina Panthers were moping around, injury-riddled and riding a four-game losing streak. Nearly every player acknowledged their playoff hopes were virtually over.

But one surprising win was good enough to get back into the race in the forgiving NFC. After Sunday's 10-3 victory in Atlanta, the Panthers (7-8) still have a chance to make the postseason.

It made their day off for

*Panthers go from  
afterthought to  
contender in  
span of one week*

Christmas on Monday a little sweeter.

"It was a gut check," said cornerback Ken Lucas, who had an interception against the Falcons. "The season hasn't been going the way we wanted it to. There's still a slight chance we might make the

playoffs, but there was no chance if we lost. So as long as we have hope."

And, amazingly, there is hope. Carolina got lots of help last weekend and would make the playoffs if three things happen on the final weekend of the regular season: The Panthers win at New Orleans Sunday, the New York Giants lose at Washington on Saturday and Green Bay loses at Chicago Sunday.

"We've squandered a lot of opportunities. I'm not sure

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## Court: Feds can access samples

Decision could impact Bonds perjury inquiry

By David Kravets and Paul Elias

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — The names and urine samples of about 100 Major League Baseball players who tested positive three years ago can be used by federal investigators, a court ruled Wednesday — a decision that could have implications for Barry Bonds.

The ruling from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals could bolster the government's perjury case against Bonds if investigators are able to link his name to a positive test from baseball's anonymous testing in 2003. The San Francisco Giants slugger has been the target of a perjury investigation since he testified before a 2004 grand jury that he didn't knowingly use illegal drugs.

The decision also could help authorities find the drug sources. Those who tested positive could be called before the federal grand jury and asked where they obtained their performance-enhancing drugs.

Greg Anderson, Bonds' personal trainer, is currently in prison for refusing to testify in the perjury probe. Anderson previously was

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Bonds

## Teammates once, friends forever with kidney donation

By Jamie Aron

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PLANO, Texas — Having grown up in Dallas, Everson Walls thought he knew his way around town. Then he started playing for the Cowboys and a third-year running back who grew up in Virginia showed him how it was really done.

Ron Springs taught the rookie cornerback where to go for free this and discount that. In return, Walls did the driving and, better yet, introduced Springs to a terrific, cheap late-night food joint — his mom's kitchen.

Kindred spirits only a few years apart, they quickly built a friendship that went way beyond being teammates. It was so much like big brother and little brother that Springs became a regular at Walls family gatherings.

By the time Springs left the Cowboys in 1985, their wives already were good friends. Eventually, so were their kids. Everyone gets along so well that they've taken family vacations together, like the time all eight

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## Sosa training for return to majors

By Dionisio Soldevila

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Sammy Sosa began training Thursday in hopes of returning to the major leagues.

"I feel like I did when I was a rookie," Sosa told The Associated Press. "I have a lot of spirit and a desire to return. I think I can play three or four more years in the form I am now."

Sosa hit the ball out of the park 15 times while training at a field in San Pedro de Macoris that is operated by the Japanese Central League's Hiroshima Carp.

The 38-year-old slugger said he had received calls from teams interested in signing him but declined to reveal their names.

He has not played since 2005 with the

Please see SOSA/2C



Sosa