

Sports

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2007

SECTION C



THIRD WARD'S NEW CATALYST/6C Catalyst, a mixed-use residential and business development, is planned for Third Ward

Bobcats bank on trade to pay off

By Mike Cranston
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michael Jordan has a message for Charlotte's skeptical fans: the expansion Bobcats are through building and ready to become winners.

Shedding their label as a frugal franchise with a hard-working yet starless roster, the Bobcats shunned a group of young college players on draft night for a proven veteran scorer with a hefty contract.

Jordan, a part-owner with the final say on personnel moves, pulled the trigger Thursday night on a deal that brought in Jason Richardson from Golden State. Jordan is convinced Richardson - who will earn about \$51 million over the next four seasons - is the missing go-to scorer that will put the Bobcats in the playoffs for the first time.

"I think we've got a great makeup and a chance to make noise in the East," Jordan said. "That's what a Jason Richardson brings."

A sense of urgency has surrounded the Bobcats since the offseason began. The day Sam Vincent was hired to replace Bernie Bickerstaff as coach, Vincent said he would be "incredibly discouraged and disappointed" if Charlotte didn't make the playoffs next season.

Strong words for a team that won only 18, 26 and 33 games during its first three seasons. But the Bobcats feel they need to become a playoff team to win over fans who soured on the NBA five years ago, when the Hornets moved to New Orleans.

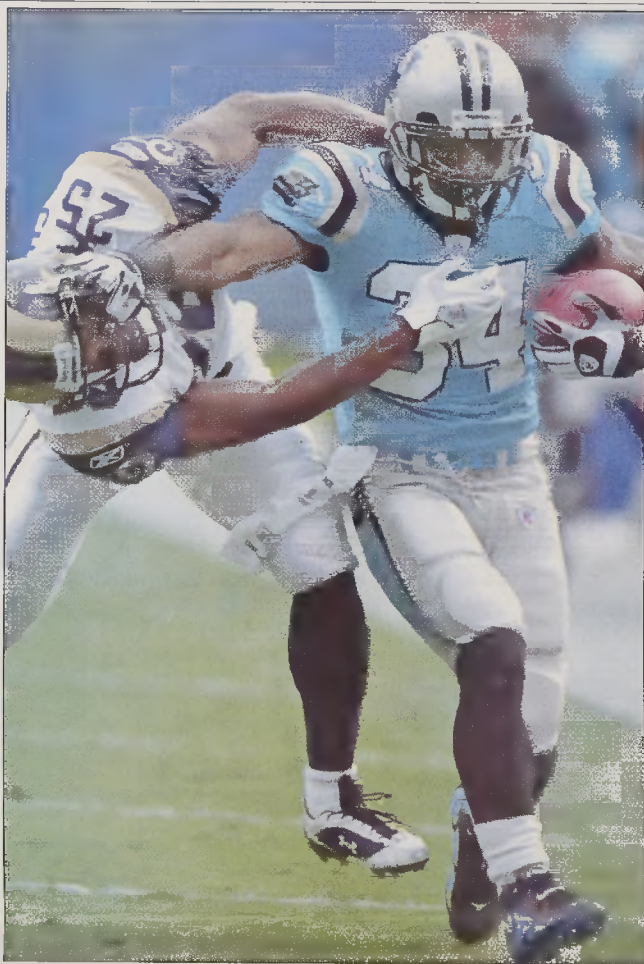
It's why the Bobcats were unwilling to wait for a young player to develop. On draft night, they sent the eighth pick - 19-year-old Brandon Wright of North Carolina - to the Warriors for Richardson.

The move may end the fan apathy, but it will be costly. On top of Richardson's big contract, the Bobcats are hoping to re-sign leading scorer Gerald Wallace, who could command about \$10 million a year.

The Bobcats earned a reputation for thriftiness under owner Bob Johnson, but their league-low payroll will spike considerably.

"I don't know if Bob knows how much we spent," Jordan joked. "We said from day one that if we could go out and find someone sig-

Please see **BOBCATS/2C**



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

The Carolina Panthers suspect running back DeAngelo Williams will benefit from new offensive coordinator Jeff Davidson's zone-blocking scheme.

If it's July, it's football season

Panthers off national radar, but there's potential for return

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

Expectations will be decidedly lower when the Carolina Panthers head down Interstate 85 on July 27 to training camp in Spartanburg, S.C.

At least nationally, in 2006, Carolina was the trendy pick to at least advance to the Super Bowl. Of course, it didn't happen, which is what an 8-8 record usually does to

championship aspirations. That's not to say the Panthers have no hope of realizing title dreams in 2007. Carolina went housecleaning during the offseason, jettisoning wildly unpopular offensive coordinator Dan and receiver Keyshawn Johnson in search of some offensive spark.

On defense, the Panthers would love to move Pro Bowl defensive end Kris Jenkins and

his reportedly excessive waistline to a new address and are holding their collective breath for a healthy season from linebacker Dan Morgan and end Mike Rucker.

There's plenty to look forward to this month, so between now and the start of camp, here are some issues to chew on:

Can this team get to the playoffs?

Please see **SINCE IT S/2C**

Onetime CIAA lightning rod shifts gears



BONITA BEST

RALEIGH - Joel Hopkins is one happy man. And he looks it. At the Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs' youth banquet last month, Hopkins looked 10 years younger.

It's been almost seven years since Hopkins was introduced as the Shaw men's basketball coach. Two years later he gave

the university its one and only men's championship.

But the fairy tale didn't have a happily ever after ending. Hopkins and the university bitterly parted ways at the end of that championship season. Since then he has received his master's from N.C. Central, where he once played basket-

ball, and he is now CEO of Dominion Health Care, a program that serves low-income and at-risk families.

Nothing like being your own boss.

At the MEAC tournament last March, Hopkins bought tickets so hundreds of kids

Please see **ONETIME/2C**

Groundbreaking golfer honored for contributions

Charlotte native Charlie Sifford (center) holds a statuette honoring his achievement in breaking racial barriers in pro golf. On left is New York Times columnist William Rhoden. Wendell Hoskins, founder of the Original Tee Golf Classic is on the right.



ORIGINAL TEE GOLF CLASSIC

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

Charlotte native Charlie Sifford's golf legacy earned another honor last month.

Sifford, the first African American to play on the PGA Tour, was honored at the eighth annual Original Tee Golf Classic at the Wild Turkey Golf Club in Hamburg, N.J. New York Times columnist William

Rhoden presented Sifford a statuette in his likeness to be known as the True Original Award.

"I've been to a lot of golf events in my lifetime, but I've never seen anything like this before," said Sifford, who is the first black inducted to the World Golf Hall of Fame. "So many black people getting together to celebrate. See **SIFFORD/2C**

Bonds deserves All-Star start

Giants slugger still productive at age 42

By Mike Fitzpatrick
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barry belongs.

And not just because the All-Star game is in San Francisco.

All sentiment (and loathing) aside, Barry Bonds is having a strong enough season to warrant a spot in the starting lineup for the National League.

Sure, he's not the unstoppable hitter he once was. Sure, the aches and pains in his 42-year-old legs have rendered his defense ... well ... indefensible.

Still, he's been one of the most productive outfielders in the league this season, and that's what matters most.

Bonds leads the majors in on-base percentage by a wide margin, thanks in large part to all those walks he draws. Pitchers and managers remain afraid of him. That's a pretty good gauge of his worth.

He ranks among the NL leaders in slugging percentage, too. And he has 15 homers for the last-place Giants, a

Please see **TRY PICKING/2C**



DAVIDSON PHOTO

Davidson's Stephen Curry hit 5-of-6 shots Monday for the USA Men's under 19 team in a 91-75 win over China in an exhibition game in Dallas.

Curry a quick study on U.S. U-19 squad

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

Stephen Curry is taking to international basketball just fine.

The Davidson sophomore earned a spot on the U.S. 19-under World Championship team June 30, then went 5-of-6 for 16 points in a 91-75 exhibition win over China in Dallas on Sunday. Curry connected on all four three-point shots.

"For never going against a zone, I thought we did a pretty good job," USA coach Jerry Wainwright said.

"Tajuan (Porter of Oregon) and Stephen played really well."

Curry helped the U.S. break open a close game by hitting five points during a 10-1 stretch to give the Americans a 47-34 lead at halftime.

The U.S. will play in the FIBA World Championship July 12-22 in Novi Sad, Serbia.