

What the Panthers want in their next GM: Someone who better meshes with coach Matt Rhule



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BRIAN HAMILTON FOUNDATION

Starter U founder Brian Hamilton (in the black sweater) meets with incarcerated residents of the Mecklenburg County Detention Center during a February meeting. Starter U is a free online entrepreneur course that's part of the Inmates to Entrepreneurs program.

Life after lockup: Program helps inmates own their job

Starter U helps incarcerated transition to entrepreneurship upon release

By Amanda Raymond

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Starting a new business is intimidating, to say the least.

Aspiring entrepreneurs may worry about how much money they need to raise to get started or how to get the right experience to make their business succeed.

But ask Toccara King, an inmate at the Mecklenburg County Jail, whether she's ready to start a business once she's released, and she'll answer with a resounding yes.

Her confidence is thanks to a new program that was introduced to the Mecklenburg County Jail earlier this month:

Starter U.

The free, online entrepreneurship course is part of the Brian Hamilton Foundation's Inmates to Entrepreneurs program. Thanks to a partnership with GTL, one of the largest technology providers to prisons in the country, the course is now on mobile tablets and available for inmates to take.

King recently took the course - along with pages and pages of notes.

"It gave a lot of information that was really easy to comprehend but very informative," she said.

Starter U is already in more than 2,400 correctional facilities. So far this year, it has a 78% graduation rate.

The goal of the course is to show people that it doesn't take a ton of money or experience to start a business.

King said she appreciated that the course addressed pros and cons of entrepreneurship in a realistic way.

"It gave such a breakdown of how to start your own business," said King, who wants to start a food truck franchise upon her release.

Brian Hamilton, the founder of the Brian Hamilton Foundation and its sister organization Inmates to Entrepreneurs, started the organization in the hopes of reducing the rate of recidivism in the country by offering another way to gain

Please see LIFE | 2A

Adams: Erase US student loan debt

Charlotte lawmaker pushes Biden to act upon inauguration

By Herbert L. White

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U.S. Rep. Alma Adams is one of four House members calling on President-elect Joe Biden to eliminate more student debt than he campaigned for.

Adams, who represents Charlotte, joined Democratic colleagues Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.), Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), and Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), chair of the House Financial Services Committee on Dec. 17 to introduce a resolution calling for the cancellation of up to \$50,000 in federal student loan debt using the Higher Education Act. The resolution, similar to one introduced earlier this year by Senate Democrats, urges an executive order that would also bar tax liability for borrowers who received forgiveness.



Adams

Biden pledged during the campaign to forgive \$10,000 in student loan debt for all borrowers and cancel the remainder for those who attended historically Black colleges or state-supported schools and earn less than \$125,000 a year.

Almost 50 million Americans have student debt. A third of all adults ages 25 to 34 have an outstanding college loan and Americans collectively owe more than \$1.6 trillion, which eclipses all credit card debt. The impact is especially acute for African American families, who tend to have fewer economic assets and are forced to borrow for college.

Please see STUDENT | 2A

The Post to host national journalism corps in 2021-22

By Herbert L. White

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The Post has been selected to host an emerging journalist through the Report for America corps.

The Post is one of 64 media outlets to join the journalism service program as a host newsroom, enabling Report for America to place more than 300 journalists in the field next year. Report for America's support is adding more than 100 new reporting positions and expanding to more than 200 newsrooms across the U.S. at a time when economic stresses from the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated economic pressures on local news organizations. LaNoticia, The Charlotte Observer, and WFAE are also host newsrooms.

"With the local news system shrinking, it's important that we both put more and more reporters in the field—and that we help newsrooms that are working toward becoming more sustainable, and more grounded in the community," said Steven Waldman, president and co-founder of Report for America. "It's particularly gratifying that newsrooms have, en masse, decided that they want to do better coverage of communities of color and rural areas."

Daily and weekly newspapers, digital-only outlets and broadcast stations are host newsrooms, where they will employ corps members as journalists to cover specific beats. The Post's corps member will report on health in the African American community.

RFA, an initiative of The GroundTruth Project, is a two-year program (with an option for a third) pays up to half of the journalists' salaries, provides train-

Please see REPORT | 2A



NORTH CAROLINA FOOTBALL CLUB

The proposed Downtown South sports and entertainment complex in Raleigh has sparked concerns of gentrification and environmental damage in mostly-Black neighborhoods in the urban core.

Controversy swirls over 'Downtown South' project

By Lori D.R. Wiggins

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

RALEIGH - The Wake County Planning Commission last week unanimously rejected a request by developer John Kane to rezone 145 acres near South Saunders and Wilmington streets and Interstate 40 for a mixed-use sports-entertainment complex dubbed "Downtown South."

Raleigh City Council, however, didn't agree.

City Council voted 7-1 Dec. 17 to confirm its support of rezoning at a special meeting. Mayor Mary-Ann Baldwin and council members Nicole Stewart, Jonathan Melton, Patrick Buffkin, Corey Branch, Stormie Forte

and David Knight voted for the plan. David Cox was the lone "nay" vote.

"This is a significant moment for our city and serves as one more step towards delivering critical infrastructure and community benefits that will shape South Raleigh for generations to come," said Steve Malik, owner of North Carolina Football Club, whose team would play in Downtown South's soccer-specific stadium. "We look forward to bringing this transformative district to life with our partners through consistent dialogue with the community and stakeholders to help shape these essential benefits and deliver with a tax increment grant.

Please see CONTROVERSY | 3A

What racial equity panel suggestions really mean

By Lori D.R. Wiggins

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

The North Carolina Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice has delivered 125 recommendations aimed at eradicating systemic racial bias from the state's systems of cops and courts.

Gov. Roy Cooper commissioned the task force in June following the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others at the hands of police and racist vigilantes. Since then, the 25-member panel held 61 meetings; hosted six listening sessions and three public hearings; accepted and studied countless submissions by the public and experts; and established two work groups each to focus on law enforcement and courts, said Supreme Court Associate Justice Anita S. Earls, who co-chaired the task force alongside state Attorney General Josh Stein. The final



Stein



Hill

Please see NC RACIAL | 2A

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Life after lockup: From inmates to entrepreneurs

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financial stability and success.

Hamilton recalled that when he started Inmates to Entrepreneurs with the Rev. Robert J. Harris in 1992, it was obvious people with criminal backgrounds were having a hard time finding jobs.

"Rather than trying to get a job, go make your own job and start your own business," Hamilton said. "That was just a great solution to me."

Starter U was created so inmates could get a head start on that front.

"There's a dire need for training people who are in prison so that when they get out, they can be productive members of society," Hamilton said.

According to the North Carolina Justice Center's NC Second Chance Alliance, 92% of employers run criminal background checks on prospective employees. Applicants with criminal records are 50% less likely to get a call back.

And according to Hope Marshall, program manager of the Mecklenburg County Re-Entry Services program, the three-year recidivism rate for the county is around 70%.

Re-Entry Services connects the formerly incarcerated to resources that can help them reintegrate into society, including housing, medical, dental, transportation and vocational training.

Marshall said recidivism rate decreases if people are connected to programs like the Inmates to Entrepreneurs program. As long as the discipline is there, Marshall argues, entrepreneurship is a smart option.

"Entrepreneurship is a good route for people that have a pretty extensive criminal history simply because they can sometimes make their own route," she said. "They can be their own boss."

And even if those who go through the program don't become entrepreneurs, Marshall said the course is still useful.

"It's definitely a win whether they go on to be their own boss or not. They can still get transferrable skills out of it," she said.

The RAND Corporation, a research organization that focuses on public policy, found that inmates who take part in correctional education programs had a 43% lower chance of returning to prison.

Hamilton plans to expand the program across North America.

"I want to make sure that this gets everywhere," he said, adding that Starter U and other Inmates to Entrepreneurs programs are ideal for those with criminal charges on their records, not just people who have been incarcerated.

Lacosta Torrence, another inmate at the Mecklenburg County Jail, said he couldn't help but take notes while going through the Starter U course.

"It teaches you how to be proactive and be a calculated risk-taker," he said.

Torrence said he already thought of himself as a risk-taker, so why not start his own T-shirt company.

"I can't wait to, upon my release, try it out and go ahead and take that risk," he said.

NC racial justice task force

Continued from page 1A
report was issued Dec. 14.

"For far too long, Black people and white people have not been treated equally in the United States, and this failure has caused real harm," said Stein. "Our report identifies opportunities for real change to make the criminal justice system fairer for every North Carolinian. I look forward to continuing this necessary work."

Some of the task force's early recommendations already are being implemented. Others will require legislation. The recommendations are categorized as law enforcement and the courts. Law enforcement recommendations focus on rethinking public safety to respond to non-criminal issues and a renewed embrace of community policing, Stein said.

The panel's recommendations ban the use of force like chokeholds; require officers to intervene in and report misconduct among fellow cops; mandate law enforcement leaders stand firm against "abuse of power" among their ranks; and promote routine psychological evaluations of officers; and more education on racial bias, crisis intervention, and mental health. The report also recommends the use of police body and dash cameras, the release of footage from those cameras that currently is off-limits and asks lawmakers to allow civil police oversight boards and grant them more power.

"It is critical that we recruit and train the kind of officers who ... see themselves as guardians, not warriors," Stein said.

In the courts, the panel calls to eliminate cash bail for nonviolent criminal suspects; reduce court costs and fines paid by those who are convicted; reclassify as civil infractions misdemeanors such as sleeping in public, begging or drinking beer in public. The report also advocates for better jury selection and oversight, and better court data collection and reporting.

The report urges legislation to decriminalize up to 1.5 ounces of marijuana, make possession a civil offense, erase past convictions, and establish a task force to study marijuana legalization. Citing research, Earls said Black people are disproportionately arrested and convicted for marijuana although both white and Black people use it at similar rates. Last year, she added, 10,000 people in the

state were convicted of having small amounts of marijuana; nearly 7,000 were minorities.

The report also addresses the school-to-prison pipeline that finds youth of color represent more than 70% of criminal complaints in the 2019-20 school year. The panel recommends raising the age a child can be prosecuted from 6 years old to 12. North Carolina's juvenile justice system currently reports the youngest age in the country. In addition, the panel recommends requiring a school administrator or social worker to first approve School Resource Officer petitions, ending life without parole sentences for juveniles, and a review of sentences of juveniles in the system now.

Many on the panel support the possibility of a truth and reconciliation commission to address the state's history of racial inequity. "It took us 400 years to get a legal system grounded in white supremacy and racism," said task force member Henderson Hill. "Undoing that legacy takes public education, and it takes process. Before you can correct anything, you've got to speak the truth."

The task force is a diverse group of North Carolinians, including criminal justice reform advocates and law enforcement officers, police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, and other elected officials.

"It is an urgent time to reconsider everything from fines and fees in petty cases, to lengthy sentences, due to their social costs and accompanying racial disparities," said Duke law professor Brandon Garrett, a scholar on criminal justice outcomes, evidence and constitutional rights.

The task force will continue its work through the end of 2022. The final report is the path toward tackling racial disparities in the criminal justice system, "not the final word."

"This work needs a permanent commission," Earls said, noting the idea, which would allow continued monitoring and examination, is a panel recommendation included in an appendix to the report. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of the panel's recommendations will be apparent. "What measures our success will be data showing reduced racial disparities, outcome measures, and lived experiences," Earls said.

Report for America newsroom

Continued from page 1A
ing and mentorship by leading journalists, peer networking, and memberships to professional organizations.

Applications will be accepted until Jan. 31 and corps members will be selected from a national pool of applicants. The newsrooms will hire their preferred candidates, who start on June 1.

"Report for America provides a unique opportunity for journalists to really sink their teeth into local, issue-oriented reporting that is missing from so many newsrooms today," RFA recruitment director Norman Parish said. "Beyond talented reporters and photojournalists, we are looking for individuals

who see journalism as a public service and want to make a difference within their communities."

Report for America prioritizes a diverse corps and is working with several professional organizations and college journalism programs to ensure newsrooms reflect the audiences they serve. To help connect corps members to the community, they are required to do a service project, which often includes engaging middle or high school students in journalism related activities.

While RFA is geared toward emerging journalists, it is also piloting an "experienced corps" for mid-to-late-career professionals with at least eight years'

experience.

Report for America, launched by the GroundTruth Project in 2017, aims to place 1,000 journalists in local newsrooms by 2024.

"There is a growing awareness that the crisis in local journalism has everything to do with the crisis in our democracy; but we believe trusted, local journalism breaks down barriers and brings people together," said Charles Sennott, GroundTruth's chief executive officer and RFA's co-founder. "Supporting local news through Report for America is part of the way forward, a way to restore civic engagement and respectful dialogue across the divides in our country."

Student loan relief sought

Continued from page 1A

"The incoming Biden-Harris administration has the opportunity to change lives and jumpstart our economy on day one by cancelling \$50,000 in student loan debt," Adams said. "These loans are holding American families back from buying houses, cars, and opening small businesses. Student loan debt prevents young families from building and creating wealth that they can pass down to their children and grandchildren - a freedom that historically has been denied to Black Americans in this country. Starting on January 20, it's up to us to rebuild the bridge to the middle class for millions of Americans. Let's start by cancelling the debt."

The resolution:

- Recognizes the federal education secretary's broad administrative authority to cancel student loan debt.

- Urges Biden to take executive action on inauguration day to forgive \$50,000 in debt per borrower.

- Insists Biden use presidential authority granted by Congress to prevent debt cancellation from resulting in a tax bill for borrowers.

- Encourages administrative debt forgiveness to close racial wealth gaps.

- Calls for extension of current loan repayment relief and interest for the du-

ration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Student debt cancellation is a racial justice issue since Black and brown borrowers face the greatest hurdles when it comes to access, affordability, and retention in higher education," said Tiffany Loftin, national director of the NAACP's Youth and College Division. In order to make education a right, we need radical policy that addresses the needs of 44.7 million people who are shackled by debt, that starts with cancellation now."

Calls for student loan forgiveness have taken on more urgency during the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent recession. More than half of North Carolinians with student debt who earn less than \$50,000 annually reported a decrease in household income since the pandemic, according to a Morning Consult survey commissioned by the Durham-based Center for Responsible Lending.

Student debt in the state tripled between 2008 and 2018 to \$44 billion, according to the center.

"We need to acknowledge that our student loan system is fundamentally broken and the first step to repair it is through across-the-board debt cancellation," said Ashley Harrington, CRL's federal advocacy director and sen-

ior counsel. "...The time has come for a new administration to prevent further financial devastation for those who are disproportionately struggling the most under the weight of their student debt burden, Black borrowers and communities of color."

Despite a pause in student loan repayments until year's end as part of the federal CARES Act, 55% of survey respondents reported a loss in earnings and 73% report stress associated with that debt. Sixty-nine percent reported trouble with unexpected financial emergencies or falling behind on debt.

"The student debt crisis is a racial and economic justice issue, and we must finally begin to address it as such. Broad-based student debt cancellation is precisely the kind of bold, high-impact policy that the broad and diverse coalition that elected Joe Biden and Kamala Harris expect them to deliver," Pressley said. "As we work to fight for meaningful economic relief for workers and families that meets the scale and scope of the crisis we face, canceling student debt is one of the most effective ways to provide direct relief to millions, help reduce the racial wealth gap, stimulate our economy, and begin to deliver an equitable and just recovery."



ISTOCK

U.S. health officials and medical professionals are enlisting the help of prominent Black Americans, including former President Barack Obama, to convince the African American community of the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Push to boost Black America's confidence in COVID vaccine

By Stacy M. Brown
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Former President Barack Obama has vowed to take the new COVID-19 vaccination on live television.

Dr. Ebony Hilton, a physician in the critical care and anesthesiology department at the University of Virginia Health, is also publicly taking the vaccine and documenting how she's coping on YouTube.

On Day 1 of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine, Queens, New York, critical care nurse Sandra Lindsay received the first dose of the two-shot vaccine at about 9:20 a.m. on Dec. 14.

What Obama, Hilton, and Lindsay all have in common is that they are African American. Intentional or not, the rollout has featured prominent Black people.

The mistrust in medicine and science in the Black community remains palpable for well-founded reasons.

"Truth and transparency are going to start with me," Hilton declared. "I want you to see me in real-time as I undergo this process, and as my body adapts as I have this medicine in my body."

Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker, an African American, also urged Black people to get vaccinated.

Baker praised Meharry Medical College President Dr. James Hildreth, one of the world's leading immunologists and an African American who sat on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's panel that approved the rollout of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine.

"There was an African American doctor that was in charge of the vaccine," Baker said during a video call.

"I felt more comfortable that he and other African Americans were on the boards to come up with the vaccine. And he guaranteed that it wouldn't be another Tuskegee kind of experiment. And he urged Black Americans to use the vaccine."

The Tuskegee Experiment, a federal public health study conducted in Alabama from 1932-72, was infamous for the government's withholding information to and lack of treatment for its subject group - African American men infected with syphilis. Health officials denied therapeutics like penicillin to the participants, leaving some to die.

"The Tuskegee Experiment ended 10 years before I was born, and we still have heavy metal laced water in Flint, Michigan, we still have not fixed," Hilton offered.

However, she offered optimism about the new coronavirus vaccine.

"So, join me, and I'll be as open and honest as possible. We have one time to do this right, and I'm hoping it's this time."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's foremost infectious disease physician, also championed the work of Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, an African American scientist, whom Fauci said was at the forefront of the vaccine's development.

"So, the first thing you might want to say to my African American brothers and sisters is that the vac-

cine that you're going to be taking was developed by an African American woman. And that is just a fact," Fauci said.

More than 300,000 Americans have died, and nearly 17 million have contracted the coronavirus. Some reports indicate that as many as 25% of COVID-19 victims are African American.

However, that hasn't stopped skepticism about the vaccine among many Black people.

"We saw early on that vaccine acceptance and willingness to enroll in vaccine clinical trials were going to be a major challenge," Dr. Reed Tuckson, a former public health commissioner in Washington, D.C., and leader of the Black Coalition Against COVID-19, a D.C.-based effort to spread information about the virus and potential vaccines to Black Americans, told NBC News.

Over the past several months, the coalition has worked with several Washington community organizations, historically Black colleges and universities, and community leaders, to share information about COVID-19 prevention.

They also drafted a public "Love Letter to Black America" that calls for people to be open to vaccines when they are available.

"The African American community needs to understand that 2020 is not 1930 or 1940," Tuckson said. "There were no African American physicians or scientists or health policy leaders in the past. Today is a different situation."

Controversy over Raleigh's 'Downtown South' project

Continued from page 1A

These benefits are and will be at the core of this district."

For over a month - as commissioners repeated expressions of concern over being rushed for a decision - unanswered questions, and unsatisfied conditions were echoed by impacted residents and allies who voiced demands and opposition. And, like the momentum some fear the project will add to gentrification and the storm water run-off that for decades has plagued historically Black Southeast Raleigh neighborhoods in its path, the proverbial floodgates aren't likely to close any time soon.

While proponents contend the project will uplift Raleigh, especially its southern corridor, critics say it shouldn't happen without community engagement between residents and developers, and surefire plans to control stormwater runoff from downtown Raleigh and Interstate 40 into Walnut Creek and the flooding it causes, and to provide solid guarantees of affordable housing, living-wage jobs, and investment in minority and women-owned businesses. There's additional concern about how the proposed project of skyscrapers will increase property taxes, speed gentrification, displace vulnerable, longtime residents, and subsequently erase the area's history and culture.

Concern also hovers over the plan itself. So far, developers have presented detailed plans for only one of three parcels of land eyed for Downtown South, leaving many to question their request for a \$300 million public investment in tax breaks through a Tax Increment Grant and the lack of a Community Benefits Agreement that could help ease the impact on the environment and gentrification.

Commissioner Nicole Bennett pointed to the project's contradiction to the city's statement on equity in which it commits to "prioritize racial equity to dismantle policies and systems that have created and sustained these inequities."

"This rezoning underscores those policies and the system that the statement itself talks about that have created and sustained these inequities," she said. The motion to deny the Downtown South rezoning request came from Commissioner Roberta Fox, saying "it is not reasonable and in the public's interest in its current form." Technically, commissioners had until Jan. 11 to decide the matter, but were pushed to decide sooner as developers said the deal

would dissipate if not rezoned by year's end.

While developers submitted new and updated information repeatedly requested by commissioners, too many items were missing or not specific enough, board's vice chair Tika Hicks said.

"It's just not fully developed for its size and its impact on the communities around it and the city as a whole," she said, emphasizing a vote to rezone for the project would be a vote against the city's comprehensive plan toward equitable development.

Forste, a Raleigh attorney who represents District D where the project could be located, said the issue "has been so challenging" as people from a variety of communities speak out about affordable housing, stormwater, and minority business participation.

"The flip side of the coin is there are people who live in District D in close proximity who are excited about the project; they're very, very interested in seeing a mixed-use development," she said, adding many applaud Kane's reputation as a developer. For her district, the development would increase access to amenities like groceries, shopping, and entertainment for residents who now have to travel to Cary, Garner's White Oak, and Cameron Village.

Branch, who represents District C, home to the historically Black, flood-zoned Rochester Heights, Worthdale, and other Southeast Raleigh neighborhoods impacted by downstream flooding and other environmental injustices, believes the project may help "slow it down," he said, adding he's witnessed other projects fix preexisting issues.

Organized Neighbors for Empowerment Wake, or ONE Wake, a platform for community engagement launched in October by faith groups and nonprofits, took its push for the environment, jobs, and housing, while also mobilizing the community, to Kane and city leaders.

"We recognize Downtown South has enormous benefits and, we also recognize, if the project is not developed with the community and the environment in mind, it can be detrimental to both," said ONE Wake steering committee member Father Jemonde Taylor, rector of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, which shares a backyard with the Walnut Creek Wetlands and a neighborhood with residents living on the flood plain.

NC native Regan in line to make an impact on US climate policy

By Ellen Knickmeyer and Gary D. Robertson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President-elect Joe Biden's climate team includes North Carolina regulator Michael S. Regan as his nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency and New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland as his pick for interior secretary.

Biden said the selections round out what he said would be an experienced climate team ready from their first day in office to tackle the "undeniable, accelerating, punishing reality of climate change."

Biden is proposing a sweeping overhaul of the nation's transportation and electrical systems to cut the oil, gas and coal emissions behind worsening global warming.

The picks also help Biden fulfill his promise to put together a Cabinet that reflects the diversity of America. Regan, a North Carolina A&T State University graduate from Goldsboro, is Black, while Haaland would be the first Native American Cabinet member in U.S. history.

Regan became North Carolina's environmental chief in 2017 and made a name for himself by pursuing cleanups of industrial toxins and helping the low-income and minority communities hit hardest by pollution. Gov. Roy Cooper, who hired Regan, told The Associated Press last week that Regan was "a consensus builder and a fierce protector of the environment."

If confirmed by the Senate, Regan would take over the EPA after four years that have seen the Trump administration weaken or eliminate key public health and environmental protections. President Donald Trump had made the agency a special target for

his drive to cut regulation, saying early on that he would leave only "bits" of the environmental agency behind.

Trump rollbacks and proposed rollbacks include weakening air pollution rules for industries, slashing protection for wetlands and waterways and eliminating Obama-era efforts to halt climate change by curbing exhaust and smokestack emissions from autos and factories. Opponents say some of many other rollbacks in the agency will make it harder for regulators to adopt new limits based on threats highlighted in public health studies.

In North Carolina, Regan led the negotiations that resulted in the cleanup of the Cape Fear River, which has been dangerously contaminated by PFAS industrial compounds from a chemical plant. PFAS have been associated with increased risk of cancer and other health problems. With Duke Energy, he negotiated what North Carolina says was the largest cleanup agreement for toxic coal ash.

Regan also created North Carolina's Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board to help low-income and minority communities that suffer disproportionate exposure to harmful pollutants from refineries, factories and freeways.

Regan previously spent almost a decade at the federal EPA, including managing a national program for air pollution issues.

Other past work included serving as an associate vice president for climate and energy issues at the Environmental Defense Fund advocacy group and as head of his own environmental and energy consulting firm.

For her part, Haaland would be the first Native American to lead the Interior Department, the powerful federal agency that has wielded influence over the nation's tribes for gen-

erations.

Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, would be in charge of an agency that has tremendous sway over the nearly 600 federally recognized tribes as well as over much of the nation's vast public lands, waterways, wildlife, national parks and mineral wealth.

She tweeted on Dec. 17, "In 4 years, Trump failed Indian Country & only broke more promises. It was exacerbated by the Administration's failure to take this #pandemic seriously. Looking forward to turning the page on this dark chapter."

Haaland's historic selection was praised by tribal leaders, progressive activists and Democratic figures alike. Some on Biden's transition team had expressed concerns about further thinning a narrow Democratic House majority by picking Haaland for a Cabinet position. But the president-elect decided that the barrier-breaking aspect of her nomination and her experience as vice chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources made her the right pick for the moment.

Regan was praised for his success even during challenging political circumstances.

Republicans controlling North Carolina's Legislature during the 2010s had eliminated dozens of department regulatory jobs and pushed business-friendly laws.

Regan "restored morale in the agency," said Bill Holman, who led North Carolina's environmental department. "He renewed the mission of the agency. ... He did the missionary work of going to the General Assembly and listening to a lot of critics of environmental legislation, addressing their concerns and finding common ground."

Holman said North Carolina has struggled with how to regulate PFAS industrial compounds, but so has every other state.



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Medical breakthroughs and a strong prognosis for a better year in 2021

Although we've come to the end of the road are popular lyrics from a song by Boyz to Men. This refrain is squarely tied to the current president. Last week, the electoral college certified that President-elect Biden had indeed won the election.



JAMES EWERS

We are at Christmas with an election that was held weeks ago. The problem was that Trump, and his un-merry men and women did not want to accept the results. And with the courts in some strange way, they thought they could get their way.

Instead, America's court system, including the Supreme Court, told them they had no standing and to get out of the way. Justice and right prevailed. We knew that Mr. T did not have a case. The sickening part of this is that we had a tyrant in the Oval Office for

four years. The good news is with the vaccines and our outlook. We have now both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines to fight the coronavirus. Healthcare workers have already started to receive them. I believe brighter days are ahead and we are slowly coming out of a dark and tragic period in our history.

There are many who would say we are still in that dark period. To some extent, that is true. The difference is that we have a medication that will counter COVID-19. For months, we were struggling and fearing the coronavirus. At least at the end of this year, we can say with a bit of confidence that next year will be better.

As we point to 2021, the question at the inquiry desk is what will next year look like? There are multiple answers to that question depending upon your view.

If you are not in a political bubble where alter-

native truths rule, then you know next year will be like Alka Seltzer. Oh! What a relief it will be to see right overtake wrong. Arguably, we have been living in a fog of fear. Our days have been a quagmire of chaos.

If you are Black like me, leaving your house and coming back has been trauma-filled. Some of us made it back while others of us perished. Sadly, but factually we are not safe even when we are inside of our homes.

Why not ask Chicago citizen Anjanette Young? Police in that city stormed into her home with guns drawn and arrested her. This incident happened almost two years ago. Ms. Young wanted the world to know what happened to her.

The Chicago police finally had to show the truth. Young said, "I feel like they didn't want us to have this video because they knew how bad it was. They knew they had done something wrong. They knew that the way they treated me was not right."

Well, I believe the police there will not fare well and will face some severe consequences.

If you are a student at any level, you have one request and that is to return to school. Students have been in and out of school since March. Learning for them has ceased to be fun. Virtual learning has been the substitute and critics say that it has hurt many students. I agree.

College students have also been at home as classrooms and residence halls have been empty. You can not sit in the student union and play bid whiz nor can you sit on the block and tell stories.

So, the vaccine if it goes according to plans will allow us to get back in the game. The vaccine will change things so make your plans for next year. Our new year will be a better year. Let us get ready!

James Ewers, a Winston-Salem native and Johnson C. Smith University graduate, lives in New Orleans.

College sports we want to save

Is the U.S. Supreme Court going to put college athletics out of business?

Last week it agreed to decide whether the NCAA's limits on compensating college athletes violate antitrust laws.

Or is it the NCAA that is changing important sports traditions by loosening to the point of elimination its rules limiting transfers of college athletes from one school to another?

Or is it state action, like that of California and its law that will permit college athletes to earn money by endorsing products or selling their images?

Two related North Carolina-connected books deal with the complicated pluses and minuses of college sports:

"Marching Toward Madness: How to Save the Games You Always Loved" by John LeBar and Allen Paul, and

"Larry Miller Time: The Story of the Lost Legend Who Sparked the Tar Heel Dynasty" by Stephen Demorest.

In "Marching Toward Madness," LeBar and Paul argue that college athletics are threatened, but they see it a different way. "Impelled by runaway spending and rampant corruption, America's much-beloved games of college basketball and football have not been so threatened since the widespread cheating scandals in the early 1950s. The specter of billion-dollar sums being showered on imperial coaches, voracious athletic directors, hordes of support staff, and lavish comforts for fat-cat fans has led to a near-deafening roar to pay the players. The injustice of such sums being amassed, in the main, from the labor of young men of color—many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds—cannot be justified."

They cite multiple reasons why paying college athletes would be a mistake and present "comprehensive reforms to end cheating and corruption in college sports, put academics first, and end the peonage of non-white athletes once and for all."

Their proposals are aimed at preserving or restoring the scholar-athlete image and tradition that provided students with the benefits of a serious educational experience together with athletics that are an important factor, but not a dominating one.

They illustrate this ideal with numerous examples from LeBar's experience as a tennis coach at Duke. He tells about some of his players who were "collegiate sports heroes who had brawn and brains, athletes who ran with blazing speed and applied gray matter just as fast."

In "Larry Miller Time," Demorest tells the story of one of the greatest of the great Carolina Tar Heel basketball players of all time. Playing for Coach Dean Smith in the 1960s, he helped create the coach's legend by winning his first two ACC titles and an appearance in the NCAA national championship game. Miller was a two-time All American and was twice named ACC player of the Year.

Miller grew up in Pennsylvania and was a record-setting and heavily recruited high school player. Duke and Carolina were contenders. Miller apparently found out that Duke basketball players came to Chapel Hill to party. Being a party loving young man, he chose to be in Chapel Hill full time.

Women loved Miller, and he loved them back. One of those women who swooned over him was a young girl named Nancy Curlee. Years later, long after she had married Demorest, they were driving near Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, where Miller was living. Nancy insisted they drop by Miller's house. They found him working in his garden, built a friendship, and the new book is the result.

Both Nancy and Stephen, who live in Hillsborough, are experienced writers who created content for television programs such as "The Guiding Light." Stephen uses those story-telling gifts to tell Miller's tales of competition, fun-loving partying, great success, near tragedy, a disappointing conclusion to his professional career, and many years living out of the bright lights until Nancy and Stephen dropped by for a visit.

"Marching Toward Madness" and "Larry Miller Time" remind us of the great days of college sports, times that are sadly slipping away.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," Sunday 3:30 p.m. and Tuesday at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV. The program also airs on the North Carolina Channel Tuesday at 8 p.m.

Advocate for racial justice agenda in America's education community

The coronavirus has shined a light on how systematic racism, unequal access to opportunity, and disinvestments in low-income communities and



JOHN KING

communities of color have compounded inequities that have long existed in our country. Black and Latino Americans, for example, are more likely to be hospitalized and die of COVID-19, are less likely to have access to quality healthcare, and are experiencing disproportionate and devastating economic instability as a result of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Black and Latino children are bearing the emotional impact of seeing their communities and families ravaged by the virus and are more likely to encounter challenges with their education—which has largely moved online—due to a lack of access to high-speed internet and devices for learning.

With a new presidential administration, we have an opportunity to begin on the path to a strong recovery from the pandemic. But COVID-19 recovery cannot happen without education recovery. And true education recovery must focus on ensuring every child's civil right to quality teaching and learning in our nation's public schools.

The federal government—specifically the Biden-Harris administration's Department of Education—can, and must, play a part in this work, by reinstating its role as a civil rights agency with a robust racial justice agenda.

To be sure, if we want to "build back better," decisive and bold federal action is required. Historically, there have been times when the Education Department has prioritized its civil rights

role to ensure that students—regardless of their race, background, ethnicity, native language, disability, LGBTQ status, housing status, or country of origin—have the opportunity to access a quality public education. But that role was abandoned under the 45th president.

As the Biden-Harris administration prepares to assume office, we believe there are important ways that the Education Department can address the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as our nation's ongoing fight against systemic racism and injustice.

First, the Secretary of Education must use his or her platform to lead a nationwide conversation about education through a racial equity lens.

That conversation must center on the needs of students from marginalized communities, clearly illuminate the impacts of the pandemic, and demonstrate how those impacts interact with and exacerbate hundreds of years of systemic racism. That conversation, shaped by the secretary's national bully pulpit, is critical to nudging our decentralized education system toward greater equity. It must be stewarded by a leader who intentionally creates and maintains space for feedback loops with communities that have been marginalized and most directly impacted by injustice.

Second, the Education Department must use all the levers at its disposal to combat educational inequities that existed prior to, and have been compounded by, the pandemic.

The Department must work with Congress to take immediate action to close the digital divide, invest additional federal resources to address learning loss due to COVID-related disruptions, and incentivize states to revise their funding formulas to make them more equitable so that students with the greatest needs receive the resources that are necessary to succeed in

college and careers. Part of this work will entail ensuring that, in places where cuts cannot be avoided, states and school districts are not disproportionately cutting public education funding from the highest-needs schools.

In the early months of 2021, the Biden-Harris administration also will be tasked with proposing a budget and advocating for that budget before Congress. We urge the new administration to hold firm to its promise to invest in programs that help our most underserved students thrive, by tripling funding for Title I; making college more affordable by doubling the maximum Pell Grant; and supporting community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions.

Importantly, we hope the Department will, along with robust investments, work with Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, a fundamental lever in advancing racial equity and opportunity for today's students.

Additionally, the Department must immediately strengthen and re-issue prior guidance that supports a racial justice agenda. This includes guidance to states, schools, and institutions of higher education to legally pursue desegregation strategies that increase diversity.

This also includes guidance issued by the Departments of Education and Justice related to ensuring that students of color aren't disproportionately subjected to overly harsh school discipline practices.

The Department also must issue guidance and take appropriate civil rights enforcement actions to ensure that students of color, Native students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families have access to the same opportunities and resources as their peers. This includes access to advanced coursework, talented and diverse educators, and safe and supportive school environments.

Finally, almost exactly five years ago, the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act ushered in a new era that provided states with greater flexibility to meet the needs of their local contexts. While the law provides guardrails that are designed to protect our most marginalized students, it required states to take greater responsibility for ensuring the civil rights of all students are protected.

Unfortunately, and much to the concern of civil rights advocates like us, we've seen that the flexibility within the law and the lack of oversight by the current administration—alongside the many failures of the federal government in responding to COVID-19—are widening gaps in access to educational opportunity for marginalized students. The Biden-Harris Education Department must right this wrong.

To do that, the incoming secretary must hold fast to ensuring that educators, families, and communities have accurate information about how students are performing in our K-12 schools, including data from statewide assessments, so that resources can be directed to schools and students in need.

Our communities are seeking the Department of Education's leadership in fighting against the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and the deep, systemic disparities that threaten to create a second-class education system for students of color.

We call upon the Biden-Harris administration to enforce federal education law, champion equitable policies, and implement a racial justice agenda as a sign of its commitment to dismantling the inequities that have denied students of color access to opportunity for far too long.

John B. King Jr. is president and chief executive of the Education Trust and former U.S. secretary of education in the Obama administration.

Marc Morial is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

NC families 'left on their own' to meet basic needs

By Nadia Ramlagan
NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

RALEIGH - The coronavirus has surpassed heart disease as the number-one killer of Americans, and a new report finds children are especially vulnerable to the personal and economic consequences of the pandemic.

Based on census house-

hold survey data taken last spring, the Annie E. Casey Foundation study found food insecurity, already a problem for more than 1 in 10 households nationwide before the onset of COVID, has spiked, particularly among Black, Brown and Indigenous families.

Vikki Crouse, policy analyst and Kids Count project

director at NC Child, said North Carolina is facing its own crisis when it comes to child well-being.

"The data show that many children and families across the country have been left on their own without support for their basic needs during the crisis," Crouse said. "We see that 1 in 5 families in North

Carolina report that they sometimes or often don't have enough to eat."

The data show 18% of North Carolina households with children said they had little or no confidence they'd be able to pay their rent or mortgage on time, while 21% of respondents said they felt down, hopeless or depressed. Sixteen

percent of parents statewide lack health insurance coverage, and some have likely delayed getting medical care for themselves or their children.

Crouse said the \$1.8 trillion in federal relief lawmakers passed earlier this year prevented more families from slipping into poverty and uncertainty.

"The CARES Act really demonstrated that our leaders can intervene to reach families and children that are struggling. We know that our country has the resources to do better by all kids and all families," she said. "Right now, we need immediate and decisive action to help families survive this catastrophe."

Sports

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2020



CHARLOTTE HORNETS

The addition of first-round draft pick LaMelo Ball (left) gives Devonte Graham (right) and their Charlotte Hornets teammates much-needed depth for the 2020-21 campaign.

Season of possibilities

Addition of competitive depth have the young Hornets looking forward to competing in Eastern Conference

By Herbert L. White

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For the first time in his three years as Hornets coach, James Borrego can look at his bench and see proper NBA-quality depth.

When the regular season tips off Wednesday against Cleveland, Charlotte's rotation can legitimately go two-deep because of the versatility on hand depending on the situation. As a result, the Hornets are build-

ing towards becoming a more complete team.

"We're excited to play regular season games. I think everyone's ready to move forward," Borrego said after Saturday's preseason finale against Orlando. "We played four preseason games, we've learned a lot and we're going to learn a lot on Wednesday night about our team. We're excited, we like what we have brewing here and we're ready to play. I think our group

is excited."

The Hornets should be, at least in terms of capabilities. Last year's squad was often overmatched in terms of bench strength, which forced Borrego to mix lineups with pieces that didn't necessarily play out as a unit. The offseason addition of talent like LaMelo Ball and Gordon Hayward brings a different attitude.

"I think it changes it a lot," guard Devonte Graham said. "I think it makes everybody

come prepared. It's not a six- or seven-man rotation. We can go 10 guys, so you know you've got to come ready to play, or you'll get subbed out pretty much. I think it helps us focus a lot more. And there's attention to detail a lot more."

Ball and forward Hayward makes Charlotte more skilled, but not necessarily playoff contenders. The Hornets are the NBA's third-youngest team, and that lack of col-

Please see HORNETS | 6A

"We can go 10 guys, so you know you've got to come ready to play, or you'll get subbed out pretty much. It helps us focus a lot more."

Charlotte Hornets guard DEVONTE GRAHAM

Aggies and Eagles keep rivalry going for decade

Deal guarantees series continues through 2030

By Herbert L. White

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The most intense college football rivalry in North Carolina will stay in place.

A 10-year deal signed last week by North Carolina Central and North Carolina A&T will ensure the Eagles and Aggies will play annually starting in 2021. They'll compete as nonconference foes with A&T leaving the MEAC next year for the Big South. The home team will alternate annually, starting Sept. 25 in Greensboro. They play April 3 in Durham as a MEAC contest.

"I know there have been some concerns about whether this great tradition of North Carolina A&T meeting North Carolina Central on the gridiron would continue with our move to a new conference this fall," said Aggies athletics director Earl Hilton said. "I am happy to say that this tradition is alive and well. We look forward to this game each year. Aggies have a lot of friends and family who are Eagles and Eagles have a lot of friends and family who are Aggies. It is truly a family feud."

The MEAC pushed back its football season to February 2021 due to the COVID-19 pan-



NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL ATHLETICS

Longtime rivals North Carolina A&T and North Carolina Central will continue their football rivalry through the 2030 season.

dem, giving A&T and NCCU one final game as league opponents - at least for now. NCCU's board of trustees met last month to discuss the school's options of finding a new league affiliation with the departures of A&T, Bethune-Cookman, Florida A&M and Hampton in the last three years. Hampton is in the Big South while Bethune-Cookman and FAMU are heading to the SWAC.

"After nearly a year of dealing with COVID-19, I am excited to get back to some sense of normalcy," said Eagles coach Trei Oliver, a standout player at NCCU and former Aggies assistant coach. "What better way to return than by announcing our new 10-year agreement with our arch in-state rival North Carolina A&T. I think it was important to alumni, students, and fans from

both universities that this rivalry continued."

The Aggies and Eagles have met in non-conference clashes before, notably when NCCU competed in the Division II CIAA on two separate occasions while A&T was in the MEAC, a Division I FCS league. The Big South is also Division I FCS.

"I want to thank our colleagues at North Carolina A&T State University for partnering with us on this agreement," NCCU athletics director Ingrid Wicker McCree said. "This game is one of the highlights of every football season for our student-athletes, alumni and fans, so we are excited to be able to guarantee that we will meet our in-state rival on the gridiron for the next 10 years."

A&T coach Sam Washington applauded

Please see AGGIES | 6A

New GM's requirement: Collaborate with Rhule

By Ashley Mahoney

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The Carolina Panthers have graduated from Marty Hurney again.

The organization announced the termination of their general manager Monday following Saturday's 24-16 loss at Green Bay. Carolina concludes the season at Washington on Dec. 27 and at home against the Saints on Jan. 3.

Hurney twice was the Panthers' general manager: from 2002-12 as well as from 2017-20. He returned to the organization on an interim basis after the team fired Dave Gettleman during a wave of changes, including a new owner in 2018 in David Tepper, who fired head coach Ron Rivera last December and hired first-time NFL head coach Matt Rhule in January.

The Panthers are 4-10, last in the NFC South and on a three-game losing streak. They finished last season 5-11 and an eight-game losing streak to close the campaign. They went 7-9 in 2018 and 11-5 in 2017, with a wild card spot as second in the division.

"I want to thank Dave and Nicole (Tepper) for the opportunity to be a part of this organization over the last three seasons," Hurney



Hurney

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Charlotte 49ers football recruits for fit with 2021 signing class

By Ashley Mahoney

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Recruiting players to fit and enhance Charlotte 49ers football is Will Healy's priority.

Charlotte announced the signing of 17 high school players on the opening day of the national signing period. Eleven recruits were rated three-star prospects by 247Sports Composite, with an additional signee rated a three-star prospect by

ESPN.com. Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina produced two three-star recruits each, with the others representing Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Healy said this class will provide the 49ers with quality depth as well as competition at varying positions. They signed eight offensive players and eight defensive, a punter and a player who can play both on the offen-

sive and defensive lines.

"The biggest thing for us was finding the right kind of culture fits, and in a year where you don't have official visits, in a year where you don't have them coming to your games every Saturday and you can't necessarily develop the same in-person relationship, I think our staff has done a tremendous job of making sure we get the background information that we need to be able to sign the

right type of guys," Healy said. "We may make some mistakes if you've got a guy who doesn't have senior film or didn't play a senior season - the evaluation process will be more difficult. However, we cannot take somebody that is not going to be the right type of person in this program."

The 2021 class includes Tyson Clawson, a 6-foot, 209-pound defensive end from Independence High and

three-star prospect according to ESPN. Clawson, a two-year varsity player heading into the 2021 spring season, has 135 career tackles, including 85 as a junior. Eighteen of his 34 tackles for loss were also as a junior, and he produced 23.5 sacks over the last two seasons. Clawson also earned first team all-Southwestern 4A in 2019.

All three of Charlotte's signed defensive ends are three-star recruits. Miguel

Jackson is a 6-foot-1, 240-pounder from Gibsonia, Pennsylvania who attended Pine-Richland High, where he was a three-year starter on offense and defense. Pine-Richland won the 2020 state championship with an 11-0 season, and Jackson leaves the program as the school's all-time sacks leader with 36.

Miles Posey heads to Charlotte from Yorktown, Virginia, where he attended Life

Please see CHARLOTTE | 6A

Hornets tip off season with depth, possibilities

Continued from page 5A

lective experience will be tested often. On the other hand, they're excited about what could become with Ball joining a backcourt that includes incumbent starters Graham (third year) and Terry Rozier in addition to fourth-year pro Malik Monk.

Hayward, who is day to day after breaking a finger on his right (shooting) hand last week in a preseason game against Toronto, is the veteran presence on a frontcourt where P.J. Washington (second season) and Miles Bridges (third) were starters last season.

Ball could play forward as well should Charlotte go to a smaller, quicker lineup. Regard-

less, competition for playing time will be intense.

"You can't get down on yourself," said Monk, who is rounding into shape after missing the early part of preseason workouts due to COVID-19.

"You can't control everything, so you've got to control what you control. That's what I learned my first and second year. You never know with this COVID situation, somebody might get hurt, like Gordon. We never thought Gordon would get hurt and Cody (Martin) had to step in. Just control what you can control and just put in the work and I think you'll be all right ... because you never know."

Charlotte recruits for fit with signees

Continued from page 5A

Christian Academy. The 6-foot-3, 220-pounder was a linebacker and defensive end in high school.

Another Charlotte three-star recruit is 6-foot-4, 290-pound offensive lineman Knox Boyd of Denton, Texas. The 8-2 Wildcats are still seeking the 2020 state 6A Division II title. They were runner-up in 2019 with a 14-2 record.

Jarius Mack (5-foot-10, 170 pounds) is a three-star wide receiver from Athens, Georgia who attended Clarke Central High, the 2020 AAAAA Region 8 champs (6-0; 8-3 overall).

Mack is a three-year varsity player. As a junior, he accounted for 1,250 receiving yards and 18 touchdowns, and 869 receiving yards and six touchdowns as a senior. He was also the basketball team's point guard.

Steven Park (6-2, 170), a three-star safety from Tampa, Florida, was a two-year starter at Tampa Bay Tech. He reached the 2020 Florida's Class 7A state regional finals and went 8-4 in consecutive years with the Titans. He had 63 tackles as a senior, and 132 career tackles, five interceptions as a senior, a fumble recovery and blocked field goal. He also returned an interception for a touchdown.

Defensive tackle Isaiah Potts is another North Carolina recruit. At 6-2 and 300 pounds, the three-star recruit will play his senior season at Pine Forest High in Fayetteville this spring. He spent the 2019 season at Peddie School, which went 8-0 and won the Mid-Atlantic Prep League championship in Hightstown, New Jersey. He had 61 tackles, eight tackles for loss, six sacks and 13 quarterback hurries.

A look at the rest of the 2021 signing class:

- B.J. Ragland (6-foot-3, 285

pounds) is a three-star recruit from Chattanooga, Tennessee who played offensive and defensive line. He was named 3A All-State at Red Bank High twice and made it to the 2020 Division I 3A state semifinals. Ragland also threw discus and shot put in track and field.

- Chavion Smith, a three-star recruit, is a 5-9, 195-pound running back at Statesville High. Smith scored nine touchdowns and averaged 10.2 yards per carry last year but suffered a season-ending injury in the fifth game. He spent three years on the Greyhounds' varsity.

- Elijah Spencer is a 6-foot-2, 190-pound wide receiver from Dutch Fork High. The Irmo, South Carolina three-star recruit spent three seasons playing varsity, winning state titles each season, and helping the Silver Foxes win 50 straight games. During a 10-0 2020 season, he had 44 catches for 858 yards and 12 touchdowns. Smith was also a high jumper on the track and field team.

- Three-star offensive lineman Trevor Timmons (6-foot-2, 275 pounds) was named to the Midlands Area Watch List prior to the 2020 season as a top 10 offensive lineman in the Columbia area. He heads to Charlotte from Blythewood High in Blythewood, South Carolina.

- Colin Weber is a 6-foot-4, 220-pound tight end from Hopkins, Michigan. The three-star recruit was named to the 2019 first team all-state for Division Five. He is a four-year football and basketball varsity player, earning all-conference and all-state for both sports. For the Hopkins High Vikings, he had 17 receptions for 362 yards and six touchdowns, as well as 49 carries for 374 carries and three touchdowns his senior season.

- Charlotte's only signed quarterback is 6-foot-2, 205-pound Xavier Williams from Moultrie, Georgia. The three-star dual threat quarterback is from Colquitt County High, where he led the Packers to a regional title before suffering a season-ending injury. He completed 73-of-188 passes for 1,085 yards and 14 touchdowns while also tallying 51 carries for 424 yards and five touchdowns. He attended Ola High School in McDonough, Georgia as a junior.

- D.J. Brown is a two-star recruit from Memphis University School in Tennessee. The 6-foot, 235-pound linebacker spent three years as a varsity player, where 81 of his 154 career tackles occurred as a junior. His junior season also included 16 tackles four loss, four sacks and four quarterback hurries.

- Cam Burden (6-foot-3, 205 pounds) is also a linebacker from Tennessee (Sevierville). He was a 2019 first-team all-state selection by the Tennessee Sports Writers Association and 2020 Region 2-3A Defensive Player of the Year. Alcoa High has won six straight state titles, two of which Burden was part of. Prior to joining the Tornados, he played quarterback at Sevier County High.

- Douglas Newsome is a 6-foot, 175-pound cornerback from Orange, Virginia, where he attends Orange County High. His junior season included 21 tackles, two tackles for loss and two interceptions.

- Bailey Rice is Charlotte's only international signing. The 6-foot, 200-pound punter is from Melbourne, Australia. He played four years in the Australian Football League, including 11 games with the St. Kilda Saints in 2018. His father, Dean Rice, played for Carlton and St. Kilda.

About time: Negro Leagues, records finally classified as major league

SPECIAL TO THE POST

NEW YORK — Willie Mays will add some hits to his record, Monte Irvin's big league batting average should climb over .300 and Satchel Paige may add nearly 150 victories to his total. Josh Gibson, the greatest of all Negro League sluggers, might just wind up with a major league record, too.

The statistics and records of greats like Gibson, Paige and roughly 3,400 other players are set to join Major League Baseball's books after MLB announced Wednesday it is reclassifying the Negro Leagues as a major league. MLB said Wednesday it was "correcting a longtime oversight in the game's history" by elevating the Negro Leagues on the centennial of its founding. The Negro Leagues consisted of seven leagues, and MLB will include records from those circuits between 1920-48. The Negro Leagues began to dissolve one year after Jackie Robinson became MLB's first Black player with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

Those leagues were excluded in 1969 when the Special Committee on Baseball Records identified six official "major leagues" dating to 1876. "It is MLB's view that the Committee's 1969 omission of the Negro Leagues from consideration was clearly an error that demands today's designation," the league said in a statement.

The league will work with the Elias Sports Bureau to review Negro Leagues statistics and records and figure out how to incorporate them into MLB's history. There was no standard method of record keeping for the Negro Leagues, but there are enough box scores to stitch together some of its statistical past.

For instance, Mays could be credited with 17 hits from his 1948 season with the Alabama Black Barons. Irvin, a teammate of Mays' with the New York Giants, could see his career average climb

from .293 to .304 if numbers listed at Baseball-Reference from his nine Negro League seasons are accurate. And Paige, who currently is credited with 28 major league wins, should add at least 146 to his total.

While some have estimated Gibson slugged over 800 homers during 16 Negro League seasons, it's unlikely that enough records exist for him to officially pass Barry Bonds for the career record at 762. Depending on what Elias and MLB rule, though, Gibson could wind up with another notable record. His .441 batting average in 1943 would be the best season mark ever, edging Hugh Duffy's .440 from 1894. Gibson's line came in fewer than 80 games, however, far short of the modern standard of 162.

"We couldn't be more thrilled by this recognition of the significance of the Negro Leagues in Major League Baseball history," said Edward Schauder, legal representative for Gibson's estate and co-founder of the Negro Leagues Players Association. "Josh Gibson was a legend who would have certainly been a top player in the major leagues if he had been allowed to play."

MLB said it considered input from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the Negro League Researchers and Authors Group and studies by other baseball authors and researchers.

"The perceived deficiencies of the Negro Leagues' structure and scheduling were born of MLB's exclusionary practices and denying them major league status has been a double penalty, much like that exacted of Hall of Fame candidates prior to Satchel Paige's induction in 1971," baseball historian John Thorn said. "Granting MLB status to the Negro Leagues a century after their founding is profoundly gratifying."

Panthers' next GM needs to collaborate

Continued from page 5A

said in a statement. "I have a great relationship with Matt and everybody in the building. I believe this team is well-positioned for the future and wish Matt, the players and the entire organization all the best."

Tepper chose to keep Hurney for his experience in player personnel after Rivera was fired. By bringing in Rhule, who lacked experience as an NFL head coach, Hurney's knowledge proved beneficial during the transition and served its purpose.



Tepper

"Quite frankly, I think was good for Matt and good for me to have another year with Marty," Tepper said. "Marty is a great guy to have as a teacher and a person like that around. It is crazy. Sometimes people think you can come in here — even though I was around football for a while (as minority owner of the Steelers) — and know what you're doing. Sometimes it's not bad to have a good teacher around to teach you some of the aspects. At some point you graduate and try to figure if you can do other things away from it to be better. That's kind of where we are."

Tepper said Hurney's replacement will be a decision-maker who aligns and collaborates with Rhule. The search is already underway, and the Panthers do not intend to use an outside firm to find Hurney's successor. While the mentality is the sooner someone's hired someone the better, Tepper

insists provisions are in place should they decide not to hire someone by next year's draft.

"We will be ready for the draft no matter what," he said.

The team signed running back Christian McCaffrey in the offseason to a four-year contract extension of an average \$16 million per year to become the highest-paid player at that position in league history. The extension keeps him with the Panthers through 2025. McCaffrey's has had an injury-plagued season, missing 11 games in 2020.

"Nobody knows how any player is going to be injured or not," Tepper said.

Hurney began working with the Panthers in 1998 as director of football administration, followed by director of football operations from 1999-2001 and ultimately general manager in 2002. He assembled talent for the team's first Super Bowl appearance in 2003, won the division twice and the NFC championship.

Carolina advanced to the playoffs four times under Hurney, including three times during his first stint. He also drafted quarterback Cam Newton and linebacker Luke Kuechly in 2011 and 2012 respectively, making the Panthers become the fourth team to earn consecutive offensive/defensive rookies of the year since the award's inception in 1967.



Rhule

Aggies and Eagles keep rivalry going for decade

Continued from page 5A

the continuation of the rivalry he's participated in on both sidelines. Washington was assistant head coach and defensive coordinator at NCCU from 1993-2000 when it was a member of the CIAA.

"I think the game is important to the players because it gives them an opportunity to compete against guys they

have been playing with or against since junior high school," he said. "The competitive fire runs real deep when you put these two teams on the field together. It is a rivalry that is starting to grow in stature along with some of the other HBCU historic rivalries like the Florida Classic, and certainly, in the state of North Carolina, it's a huge event in terms of bragging rights."

It's homecoming season for Bronico with Charlotte FC

By Ashley Mahoney

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Brandt Bronico is coming home.

The former Charlotte 49ers midfielder and High Point native is the third player to sign with Charlotte FC. Bronico, who was selected in the third round, 47th overall in the 2017 MLS SuperDraft by Chicago Fire, was acquired in a trade along with Chicago's fourth-round pick in the 2022 draft in exchange for Charlotte's 2022 fourth-round selection.

Bronico was unavailable for comment Friday because he was getting married to former Charlotte 49ers women's soccer player Rebecca Beatty in a ceremony officiated by Bronico's former 49ers teammate Hans Honer.

Bronico, the first American to sign with Charlotte FC, shared in previous interviews with QCF that returning home at some point during his career appealed to him. He joins midfielders Sergio Ruiz of Spain, who is on loan with Spanish second division side Las Palmas and Australian Riley McGree, who is on loan with second-division Birmingham City in the English Football League Championship.

Bronico, who started 40 of his 60 appearances for Chicago, scored two goals and eight assists for the Fire. His local ties run deep as Conference USA Player of the Year and second-team All-America as a senior while leading the 49ers to the second round of the NCAA tournament in 2016. Bronico, who left the program with 25 goals and 23 assists, represents concrete evidence of 49ers players succeeding at the next level.

"It takes something quite abstract, a dream or a goal that you are always aspiring to, and it makes it more tangible for our program that, 'Brandt was in your shoes,'" Charlotte 49ers coach Kevin Langan said. "He sat in your locker room. He was coached by your coaches. He wore the same uniform that you are wearing, and now look at him and where he is now."

Bronico also played for Charlotte FC Technical Director Marc Nicholls as a youth player for the North Carolina Fu-

sion and the Carolina Dynamo (USL League Two). Nicholls was technical director for N.C. Fusion.

"I played for him when I was maybe 15-18 for the Fusion, and then I played PDL under him my first year," Bronico told QCF in January. "I always had a great experience with Marc. He knows the game really well. He puts his belief in his players. Tactically, he tries to do the best he can with the players he has, and he utilizes them really well. Our team did a lot better than we were supposed to, because of Marc, and how well he managed the players and the tactics he brought into each game."

"I always felt like he believed in me, and he always pushed me to be better. He knew I wanted to play beyond college. I think he prepared me very well for that."

Said Nicholls: "I feel like the stars aligned for me a little bit with it with the timing and role, and obviously having some knowledge of the market—what a fascinating and unique experience to be involved with something from the start."

Bronico focused on being a great teammate and a positive locker room presence during his time with Chicago. As a rookie, he also played with German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, who has won almost everything there is to win in the game.

"I never thought I would play along Bastian Schweinsteiger," Bronico said in a previous interview. "He's won every single thing you can win—World Cup, Champions League, Bundesliga. As far as European soccer goes, he's done it all. It was a fantastic experience. I'm sure he was getting annoyed with how much I was asking him, and trying to pick his brain about what I can do better, and how can I be more like him."

Now Bronico heads to Charlotte as the experienced player who will help lead the inaugural roster.

"They are getting a player who has close ties to the city," Langan said. "He will be able to resonate and relate to the community, and then he is coming with great experience in the league."



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