

'Go get it mentality'
J.C. Smith controls its fate in the CIAA
football race with Winston-Salem State
coming to McGirt Field Saturday



THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

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JOHN BARNETT

Dee Camm Washington (second from right) and family spokesman John Barnett (left) show photos of Ariana Baldwin, 6, who died last year in Dallas, North Carolina. Ariana's family plans to file a federal civil rights lawsuit against Gaston County officials stemming from denying access to autopsy results and medical reports.

Mom's pledge: 'I will not stop' until justice is served

Family of Gaston County girl pledges legal action over handling of autopsy

By Charles K. Harris

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The parents of a Gaston County girl who died during a sleepover in 2024 are pulling out all the stops in pursuit of the truth.

"I will not stop until my daughter's truth is told," said Dee Camm Washington, the mother to 6-year-old Ariana Baldwin, one of two girls who died last year in the pool of a Dallas, N.C., family. Washington and Ariana's father, Travis Baldwin, announced plans to file a \$500 million federal lawsuit against Gaston County officials claiming a violation of

their civil rights. Washington and Baldwin feel they were deliberately misled about facts surrounding Ariana's death, in addition to being denied access to autopsy results and medical reports.

The deaths were ruled "accidental" by investigators.

On May 25, 2024, Washington dropped Ariana off at the home of her 7-year-old classmate who was having a birthday sleepover. The following morning, according to investigators, the classmate's father found both girls "unresponsive" at the bottom of the family's pool and called EMS.

Both girls were pronounced dead. However, Ariana's parents had questions about details surrounding the death, as well as how much effort investigators were really putting into their work. Their suspicions were compounded when the family noticed contusions and bruising on Ariana's body following the autopsy that were not mentioned in the coroner's report.

"The autopsy ignored facial bruising, a forehead dent, and a chest contusion that were documented by first responders," says Washington. "[The au-

Please see MOM | 2A

Hampton among HBCUs bracing for Blexit as homecoming fare



By Tyler Steinberg

HOWARD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

HAMPTON, Va. - As Hampton University's homecoming week approaches, a politically active conservative group is preparing for an appearance on or near campus that has already generated debate and scrutiny across multiple HBCUs.

Blexit, co-founded by Candace Owens and Brandon Tatum, is hosting a tour titled "Educate to Liberate" that targets 10 historically Black colleges and universities during their homecoming seasons.

The organization encourages people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds to "exit" the Democratic Party and embrace conservative values centered on individual responsibility, free markets, faith and education reform.

Please see BLEXIT | 2A

"Voter suppression tactics, including harmful legislation changes to election laws, keep a moving target on the backs of Black college students," said Jovita Lee, program director at North Carolina Black Alliance. "Ensuring that the right of young people to register to vote and have their ballot counted when using same-day registration is something that is imperative to protect."

SB 747, which became law two years ago when the General Assembly's Republican supermajority overrode Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto, requires county

Please see FEDERAL | 2A

Reactions at historically Black Hampton University in Virginia to Blexit's visit this week range from curiosity to concern.

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Please
Recycle



Gerrymander deals blow to minority representation

Continued from page 1A

the Senate along partisan lines on Oct. 21, move to the House of Representatives for consideration. The remap isn't subject to gubernatorial veto, meaning passage in both chambers will make the changes final. Lawsuits are expected upon passage.

Trump demanded Republican state lawmakers rewrite congressional maps to defend his agenda in Washington - starting with Texas and spreading to other states with GOP supermajorities. Democratic-leaning states responded with California passing a bill to establish a voter referendum next month, followed by Illinois. North Carolina's single-district shift is small by comparison, but the message is clear: craft a majority Republican 1st in the state's so-called "Black Belt."

The current district is 40% Black, 47% white and skews slightly Republican.

"The motivation behind this new plan is straightforward," said Republican state Sen. Ralph Hise, who chairs the Senate Redistricting Committee. "The new congressional map improves Republicans' critical strength in eastern North Carolina."

Senate Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) contends the new map is a response to partisan attempts to derail Trump's drive to remake the federal government, where the White House, both chambers of Congress and the Supreme Court have veered to the right.

"The Democrats want to do everything they can to block President Trump's America First Agenda," he said in a statement. "North Carolinians support President Trump and it's incumbent on us to fight back against all attempts to defeat the will of the people of North Carolina as expressed in the 2024 presidential election."

Retired U.S. Reps. Eva Clayton and

G.K. Butterfield, who collectively represented the 1st for more than 30 years, slammed the remap in a joint statement as a blatant attempt to strip voters of color of their political power. Butterfield and Clayton, like Davis, are Black Democrats.

"From the moment the district was reconstituted in the early 1990s, it has symbolized progress born of sacrifice and the hard work of generations who fought for equal access to the ballot box," Clayton and Butterfield said. "We were proud to serve all the people in this district and are now dismayed to see the legislative leadership's intent to dismantle it for pure partisan advantage."

"The proposed congressional map would silence communities that have long been the backbone of northeastern North Carolina, fracturing counties and towns that share common bonds of history, economy, and hope. This is not merely a political act - it is a moral regression. It weakens the representation of Black North Carolinians and undermines the promise of equal voice and fair elections that so many have fought to secure."

Said Theodos: "Efforts to manipulate district maps to secure political advantage undermine the integrity of our elections and silence the voices of everyday North Carolinians. If leaders are confident in their record, they should welcome accountability at the ballot box, not hide from it through political maneuvering."

North Carolina's elections belong to its people, not to politicians or political machines. Rigging maps is not governance; it's an attempt to limit voter choice and weaken trust in our institutions."



Clayton

Butterfield

Federal court hears lawsuit on North Carolina voter suppression

Continued from page 1A

boards of election to verify voters' identification through a driver's license or Social Security number within two business days of registration. If the application meets qualification standards, the board mails a registration card to verify the address.

If the card is returned as undeliverable, a second will be mailed. If the confirmation is again returned - regardless of reason - the registration and ballot will be disqualified without notice or appeal.

"Every voter deserves confidence that their ballot will count," said Jennifer McMillan Rubin, President of the League of Women Voters of North Carolina. "Disenfranchising voters over a piece of returned mail undermines trust, fairness, and the integrity of our elections."

The law was among a series of Republican-sponsored legislation to limit or suppress voting among groups that tend to vote for Democrats. The plaintiffs insist that removing restrictions like SB 747, voter ID requirements and early voting site limits allows more people to cast ballots.

"SB 747's changes to the same-day registration process both discriminate against young voters and infringe upon the fundamental right to vote," said Adrienne Spoto, counsel for voting rights at Southern Coalition for Social Justice. "Young voters overwhelmingly rely on same-day registration compared to other age groups. ... Rather than adding even more barriers to this process, we should be fostering a system that allows everyone's voices to be heard."

Plaintiffs also cite previously documented difficulties young voters, including college students who split time between home and campus, face challenges with reliable and timely mail delivery.

"We have the privilege of seeing firsthand how deeply so many young people want to be engaged in our electoral process," said Marques Thompson, organizing director and acting executive director at Democracy NC. "Our democracy works better when we have all generations represented in conversations about the future of our state and nation."

Blexit at Black college homecomings

Continued from page 1A

The group operates in partnership with Turning Point USA, founded by Charlie Kirk, a national conservative youth organization known for its right-wing activism on college campuses.

Kirk was assassinated last month on a Utah college campus during a debate.

Blexit has already visited campuses such as Jackson State University, but a planned stop at Florida A&M University was canceled amid student backlash to the visit. Hampton and Howard universities are scheduled for tour stops on Oct. 24. The group's arrival comes weeks after a contentious encounter at Tennessee State University, where a separate conservative outreach group appeared unannounced with signs reading "DEI Should Be illegal" and "Deport All Illegals Now."

University officials said

the group had not received permission to hold an event and was escorted off campus by police. Videos of students protesting and removing signage quickly went viral, drawing national attention and criticism of the group's tactics.

While Blexit was not directly involved in the TSU incident, the episode has led many HBCU administrators and student leaders to call for clear policies on outside political organizations hosting events during homecoming season.

At Hampton, student and faculty reactions to Blexit's visit ranged from curiosity to concern. "I'm all for people expressing their views, but I worry that this isn't about conversation, it's about putting out a very specific political agenda at a time when campus is supposed to be celebrating our community and culture," said Ethan Adu of New Britain, Connecticut, a student leader and junior marketing major.

Robert Burroughs of New

the group had not received permission to hold an event and was escorted off campus by police. Videos of students protesting and removing signage quickly went viral, drawing national attention and criticism of the group's tactics.

While Blexit's "Educate to Liberate Tour" comes to Hampton, students are preparing for an event that is likely to spark lively discussion, and even controversy. While some see it as an opportunity to hear a different perspective, others worry about its timing and the potential impact on homecoming traditions.

The visit may challenge students to engage thoughtfully and maintain composure amid an event designed to provoke strong reactions.

Tyler Steinberg is a student in the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications at Hampton University. This article is part of a collaboration with HUNewsService.com.

Mom pledges to fight for justice in autopsy results

Continued from page 1A

[t]opsy] lacked any findings consistent with drowning."

Washington contends Gaston County officials have only responded with "continued silence."

"The investigation was quietly closed in 2024 without addressing the contradictions, and without notifying [Baldwin's parents] until July 9, 2025," Washington said.

Fueling the family's frustration, Washington adds, is that investigators have allegedly refused to share official case records and pictures with them.

Washington retained independent forensic investigator Konnie Ford in July, who examined the original autopsy and medical report.

"[Ford's] investigation confirmed the absence of drowning indicators," Washington said, "and the presence of trauma injuries."

Washington said Ford's findings were "validating" to family who have questioned the official response.

Ford's report states "Ariana's hair and clothing were dry, her lungs of normal weight, and there was no water in her airways or wrinkling of the skin."

Washington says she submitted Ford's findings to both Gaston County Police Department and Gaston County District Attorney Travis Paige shortly thereafter.

Around the same time Ariana's parents connected with civil rights activist and attorney John C. Barnett III and made their first public call to action in front of the Gaston County Courthouse.

In addition to demanding a response from Gaston County police and the district attorney, Barnett urged federal authorities to launch an investigation.

Washington confirmed that both the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have received a formal complaint from the family along with related evidence. To date, neither agency have publicly commented on their involvement in the case; however, Washington said her

legal team is in "active communication" with federal officials who are reviewing the complaint.

According to Barnett, just a few days after the Gaston press conference, Paige's office reached out to schedule a meeting with family members to discuss Ford's report. However, the meeting was abruptly canceled by the district attorney a few days later.

On July 30, District Attorney Travis Paige's office released an official statement that his office reviewed the investigation into the drownings conducted by Gaston County police and as a result "determined Ariana Camm Baldwin's death was a tragic accidental drowning, and the facts surrounding that drowning did not rise to the level of chargeable, criminal negligence."

"What happened to Ariana was not an accident," Washington said. "It was a cover-up."

Ariana's family held a press conference earlier this month in front of the federal courthouse in Charlotte, where Barnett called for action from Gaston and federal officials. The family also revealed their intent to file a lawsuit.

Although Washington describes herself as "extremely devastated" she insists the pursuit of truth has taken on a larger meaning.

"We are fighting not just for her, but for every child whose story was buried to protect someone in power," she said, adding, "Ariana's case stands as a mirror reflecting a painful American truth that Black and underprivileged families too often face silence and obstruction instead of justice."

Washington did not elaborate on who she suspects might be behind a cover-up, but reiterated that "race, power and politics" are the driving force behind instances where families are left groping for answers.

"[Ariana's] story is not isolated," she said. "It represents countless cases where Black children's lives are devalued and dismissed."

The Charlotte Post



NCDOT TO HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING THE PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT A ROAD FROM U.S. 70/U.S. 601 NEAR BRENNER AVENUE TO THE INTERSECTION OF CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD, U.S. 29, and PEELER ROAD IN ROWAN COUNTY

STIP Project No. U-5901



SALISBURY - The N.C. Department of Transportation is hosting a public meeting to discuss the proposal to construct a road, part on new location, from U.S. 70/U.S. 601 (Jake Alexander Boulevard) near Brenner Avenue to the intersection of Cedar Springs Road, U.S. 29, and Peeler Road in Salisbury. The purpose of this meeting is to provide interested citizens with information on the project and gather public input on the proposed design.

Project details and maps can be found on the NCDOT project web page publicinput.com/airportparkway-salisbury. The information will be available at the meeting allowing for one-on-one discussions with NCDOT staff, but there will be no formal presentation.

The meeting will be held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Nov. 5 at the **Salisbury Civic Center, 315 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, in Salisbury**.

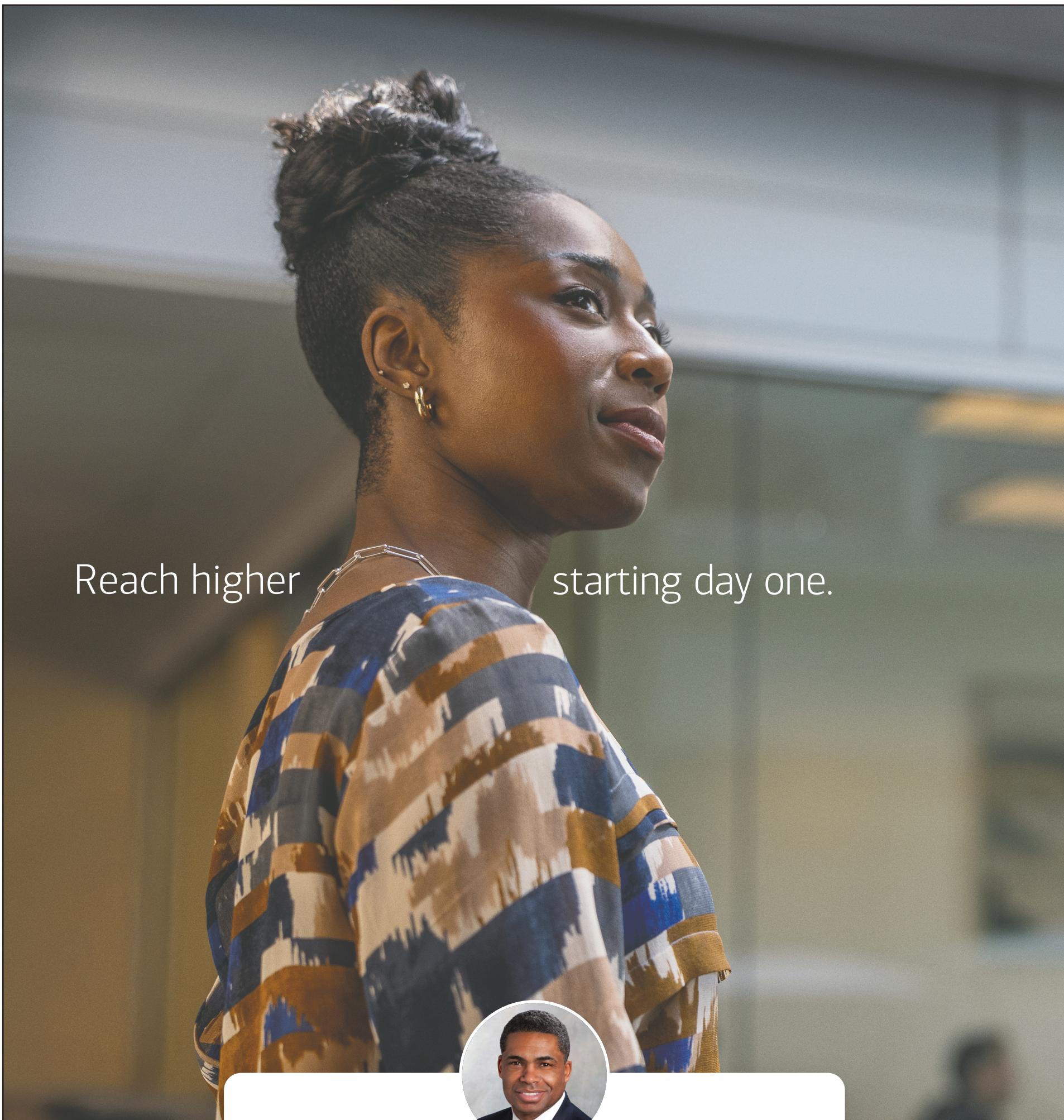
People may also submit comments by phone at 984-205-6615 project code 7045, email airportparkway-salisbury@publicinput.com, or mail at the address shown below by **December 5, 2025**.

By Mail: W. Al Blanton, PE, PLS
NCDOT Highway Division 9 –
Division Project Development Team Lead
375 Silas Creek Parkway
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27127

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled people who wish to participate in this meeting. Anyone requiring special services should contact Tony Gallagher, Environmental Analysis Unit, at 1598 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1598, 919-707-6069 or magallagher@ncdot.gov as early as possible so arrangements can be made.

Persons who do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494.

Aquellas personas que no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al 1-800-481-6494.



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Emperor Trump has no clothes

Sadly, Donald Trump seems less and less able to save himself from his worst impulses.

He is undressing, revealing himself, in front of us every time he opens his mouth. People around him dare not chide or correct him on his behavior. They fail to tell him what all of us can see - "The Emperor has No Clothes."

It is sad to watch.

Everywhere he speaks in public he rants at his enemies, NATO, the Democrats, and anyone who challenges him. The most recent despicable acting out of his personal grievance was at the Charlie Kirk funeral. Charlie's way was conversational and influential. Erica Kirk had just finished talking about how Charlie would be offering forgiveness. She said she would forgive the young assassin because that is what Jesus would do.

Her words had not stopped resonating through the room when Trump stood up and said - looking at her, "I hate my opponents. I don't want the best for them." Gulp. A starker contrast could not have been made.

He went on, "We have radical left lunatics out there, and we just have to beat the hell out of them."

This is the same language we have heard since 2015, when he called on police to beat the people who were chanting words challenging him.

We all quickly learned how thin-skinned he was. I thought it was fragile ego or the absence of parental love. I have heard people suggest his behavior reflects "malignant narcissism." Sadly, he has never been treated for this, or taught compassion, etiquette, decorum, social skills, morality or impulse control. A lot of people have obviously failed Donald throughout his life.

Bullies learn their skills in the school yard. Teachers may try talking to parents. The Trumps may or may not have listened. Church obviously was not part of his upbringing. Nor were Boy Scouts or any organization that could mold him into a moral person who had empathy, compassion, and love.

What a loss for him that he missed out on the joy of generosity and kindness, hospitality and goodness. Instead, the people who are around him constantly walk on eggshells, lest they get him riled up. The thoughts of revenge and retribution eat at his soul.

His life will be recorded in history as that of a pathetic human being, one who lost his life to petty grievance, selfishness, and hate. In the meantime, he is overseeing the dismantling of democracy. Russell Vought, Stephen Miller and others are directing him. The loss of world regard and status, as well as the losses here in the U.S. are shameful. His legacy will be long and ugly. What is lost may be difficult to rebuild.

Sadly, there is no one in his orbit who has enough influence to call him off the ledge. It's hard to watch.

At the end of the Davidic Monarchy, 922 BCE, the kingdom was divided into a Northern Kingdom, Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, Judah. In the years the divided kingdom existed, both good and bad kings ruled until 721 BCE when Judah fell to Assyria. The Southern Kingdom, with its capital, Jerusalem, fell in 586 BCE to Babylon.

Tales of their kingdoms fill the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, giving us wonderful insight of God's work in the world long before Jesus comes on the scene.

Bad kings dot the history of the world from many corners. Countries change. Ruler by ruler, structures of governance change. There is a pendulum that swings in the hearts of people who want change, even if the change is wrong for them.

We have midterm elections in 2026. There may be a chance that we will be able to win a few seats, despite radical gerrymandering, that might slow down or stop the damage. A lot of us have worked to sound the alarm about the dangerous and uncivil leader. His closest sycophants are implementing Project 2025, with glee. His base has never heard some of his outlandish words or actions. It's beyond me to see that 40% of the public still blindly follow him. People are always willing to believe conspiracy. Social media is filled with conspiracy and propaganda that is gobbled up like a drug.

I pray more people will begin to hear speech like he gave at the Kirk funeral, at NATO, the gathering of the generals, and everywhere else he is given a microphone.

Everything is not a rally. Sometimes occasions are solemn and reverent. Sometimes real leadership is needed. Sadly, leadership and statesmanship are not part of the Trump repertoire.

Lib Campbell is a retired Methodist pastor, retreat leader, columnist and host of the blogsite www.avirtualchurch.com. She can be contacted at libcam05@gmail.com

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LETTERS

Our time is now. Get out and vote.

By Natalie Beard

SPECIAL TO THE POST

The history of voting in our democratic society carries many ordeals, including but not limited to: eligibility requirements, age restrictions, intentional efforts to deny certain groups the right to vote, conflicting state and federal laws, and even the brutality and death of those who fought for voting rights.

Added to this is the way political parties often use information to either encourage or discourage voting, which undermines the vitality of our democratic ideals.

The Historic West End Neighborhood Association

consortium therefore uses the familiar reference, "The Urgency of Now!" in relation to the November 2025 elections. The recent decision by the North Carolina State Board of Elections to allow counties to eliminate Sunday voting is an outright attempt to discourage voters who participate in "Souls to the Polls" efforts - organized by churches, communities, and civic organizations to support working families who are only available to vote on Sundays due to job and family obligations. These efforts dispropor-

tionately impact Black voters and other marginalized citizens.

Now is the time to take someone to the polls, engage youth, and remind everyone about early voting.

Now is the time to consider the total body of work of each candidate, not just the isolated incidents political bodies use to disparage them.

Now is the time to learn about candidates who collaborate to address housing affordability, education, environmental sustainability, and crime. Now is the time to read the entire ballot and ensure accurate information

is shared about bonds and other issues that affect all citizens, not just certain segments of our community.

Now is the time to bring about good controversy.

And now is the time to remain vigilant about voting and to never give up - because too many have sacrificed, and even died, for all of us to vote with dignity and pride.

Natalie Beard is president of the Historic West End Neighborhood Association, a voluntary consortium of 18 residential communities along the Beatties Ford Road Corridor.

We're crossing environment's tipping point

We've crossed first tipping point. America will pay.

My parents' marriage was against the law in Maryland in 1966, so they moved west.

By the time I was born in 1973, they had settled in Monterey County, California - the same year the last

cannery on Cannery Row shut down. The Hovden Cannery closed its doors, marking the end of an era. Where it stood, the Monterey Bay

Aquarium would eventually rise, a monument to what we'd lost and hoped to restore.

When I was 12, in 1985, I became a guide at that aquarium - the youngest in my class. Standing in a building literally constructed on cannery ruins, I told visitors about kelp forests, sea otters, and the remarkable return of the sardines. Through the 1980s and 1990s, they came back.

The ocean, given a chance to rest, proved resilient.

As a kid who often felt out of place in the local community, the ocean was my refuge. I learned that the ocean can be a patient teacher. But the lesson she's teaching now, according to leading scientists, is one humanity may never recover from. Worse, its impact will be felt across the entire nation - first with rising seafood costs, then with far more serious consequences.

Last week, scientists announced the world has reached its first climate tipping point. Coral reefs - supporting a quarter of all

marine life and nearly a billion people - are in widespread, irreversible collapse. Since 2023, over 80% of the world's reefs have suffered the worst mass bleaching event ever recorded. Underwater explosions of color and life are turning into bleached wastelands.

This is fundamentally different from the sardines. When sardine populations crashed in the 1940s and '50s, the fish survived elsewhere. The ocean remained intact. When fishing stopped, they had somewhere to return. Recovery took decades but was possible.

Coral reefs ARE the foundation. When they die, the habitat disappears. The three-dimensional structures providing shelter, feeding grounds, and nurseries collapse into rubble. Unlike sardines that bounce back in decades, coral reefs take centuries or millennia to rebuild - if they can rebuild at all under continued warming.

Scientists are clear: we've crossed a threshold. Unless we reverse global temperatures back to just 1 degree above pre-industrial levels - not just stop them rising but bring them down - these ecosystems will be lost. Small refuges may survive, but vast, thriving reefs will be gone on any timeline that matters to our children.

Here's what keeps me awake: this is just the first domino.

The same report warns we're approaching other catastrophic tipping points - the Amazon rainforest, Atlantic Ocean currents regulating weather worldwide, ice sheets controlling sea levels. Each one, if it tips, could trigger others in a cascade of irreversible

changes.

These aren't abstract threats for any American. The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, including the Gulf Stream, could collapse within our lifetimes. If it does, global food production faces deva-

Nearly 60% of land suitable for wheat would become unusable. Same for 59% of corn-growing land. America's agricultural economy would face catastrophic disruption - drastic rises in bread prices, widespread hunger, potentially mass starvation in vulnerable regions worldwide.

Amazon rainforest collapse - another looming tipping point - would remove one of the world's largest carbon sinks, accelerating warming everywhere and intensifying droughts, heat waves, and extreme weather already plaguing communities from coast to coast.

We're not discussing problems our grandchildren will face. We're talking about changes fundamentally reshaping civilization within decades.

But we still have agency. Scientists documenting this crisis also found positive tipping points in our favor. Solar power has gotten cheap enough that people are choosing it over coal. Electric vehicles are following the same path. We're proving we can change how we power our world.

What we need now is action that matches the threat. Next month, world leaders meet in Brazil for COP30 - the annual climate summit where countries make promises about cutting pollution. For a farmer worried about next year's growing season, here's

why it matters: if countries commit to stopping the burning of coal, oil, and gas - and fast - we can slow the damage. If they don't, we're looking at soil that won't grow crops, water that won't come when seeds need it, and weather so extreme it wipes out entire harvests.

The small pockets of healthy coral that remain need protection from pollution and overfishing - every other stress we can remove. And we need to pull some of the carbon pollution back out of the air, the same way you'd pump water out of a flooded basement. It's not enough to stop adding more; we have to remove what's already there.

As that 12-year-old aquarium guide, I taught visitors about resilience and recovery. Sardines taught me the ocean can heal when we give it a chance. But coral reefs teach a harder lesson: there are thresholds beyond which healing becomes impossible on human timescales. We're learning the difference between damage that can be undone and wounds that become permanent.

The ocean has been a patient teacher. But this lesson - about irreversible tipping points and cascading collapse - is one we cannot afford to fail. The consequences won't stay in the ocean. They're coming for all of us, no matter where we live.

We crossed the first tipping point. We cannot afford to cross the next ones.

Ben Jealous is a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania and former president and CEO of the NAACP.

PEOPLE OF NOTE

Isaiah Milfort debut at the Gantt Center

STAFF REPORTS

Charlotte native Isaiah Milfort's homecoming includes a new exhibition at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture.

"EGOLESS: Selected Film" by Isaiah M., is a look at Black stardom and celebrity culture through Milfort's lens. The North Mecklenburg High School graduate is creative director who has collaborated with major recording artists including Lil Wayne, Mary J. Blige, Cardi B, Lil Baby, and Young Thug. His photography has appeared in The Fader, Rolling Stone, and XXL.

The exhibit opens Oct. 24 at 7 p.m. with an immersive experience, followed by an interactive creative workshop on Oct. 25 at 12 p.m. that will show the recording artist promotional process from concept development to creative execution. Anyone interested in exploring creative careers and passions is encouraged to join.

The exhibit, which is a combination of still photography and footage, is a collaboration with the

Gantt Center's Mecca of Digital Arts. Visual arts and music production have long been passions for Milfort, and "EGOLESS" is another step in the journey.

"Experimenting with visuals and sound from my makeshift bedroom studio helped me make sense of emotion," Milfort said in a statement. "Whether through film, photography, or music, my goal has always been to visually represent feeling and bring others into that experience with me."

The Knothole Foundation has additions to its leadership and advisory teams.

Matthew Corlew is director of baseball programming. Corlew will oversee all aspects of baseball initiatives, including camps, clinics, and player education programs designed to make the game more accessible to youth of all backgrounds.

Broadus Roberson was

named to the board of directors. Roberson is business analyst for 23XI Racing, where he supports data-driven strategy and operational performance for the NASCAR's Cup Series organization.

Dillon Lewis and Isaiah

Bennett were appointed

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith defensive back Divine Ochiaeri (13) and defensive end Jaxon Hickson (33) douse defensive coordinator Barry Tripp after the Golden Bulls' 52-0 win at Shaw on Oct. 18, 2025. The Golden Bulls, who are a game behind Virginia Union and Fayetteville State in the CIAA standings, play Winston-Salem State Saturday at McGirt Field.

JC Smith applies 'go get it mentality' as CIAA football title chase unfolds

Golden Bulls, a game behind Va. Union and Fayetteville State, still control destiny with three games left

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Johnson C. Smith is still relevant in the CIAA football title fight.

The Golden Bulls earned another week to compete atop the conference standings after last week's 52-0 win against Shaw to clinch a third straight winning season, the program's longest stretch since 1966-73. Immediately important is Smith (6-1, 3-1) remains a game behind Virginia Union and Fayetteville State for the conference's best record and a berth in the title game.

"Our young men, we make sure that they're aware of everything that's going

on in the conference in Monday meeting," coach Maurice Flowers said. "We'll show the standings and our young men know if you get two losses, you've got to look for some chaos to happen, and now your destiny is in someone else's hands. Heck, if you get one loss ... really one loss is like two, because now you lose the head-to-head [result], so ... we look at the tiebreakers for the conference."

It's also the motivation to keep winning with three games remaining in the regular season. A sweep - against Winston-Salem State, Fayetteville State and Livingstone - means another trip to

Durham for the title game and perhaps the postseason.

"Coach says every game is everybody's championship, Super Bowl-type game," said defensive end Kevin Haynes, a sophomore defensive end who tallied a couple of Smith's school-record nine sacks and scored on a 15-yard fumble return.

"So, we've got to take every game serious now, more serious now, because we need to be back here."

Smith, ranked 21st in this week's na-

tional Division II media poll and No. 22 among coaches, handled business at Shaw's homecoming with a dominant effort, especially on defense, where the Golden Bulls earned their first shutout in Flowers' four seasons as coach. They limited the Bears to 103 yards and Cadarius Stanley and Damarion Jackson joined Haynes with a pair of sacks.

"The first shutout in our four years, that is outstanding," Flowers said. "We've been playing good defense here for a good minute the last three years, and then for us to know we're going to finish above .500 ... that just says what

Please see GOLDEN | 6A

Get physical: Redshirt freshman runs with power, purpose

By Herbert L. White

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Bobby Smith runs with authority. Trailing nationally ranked Valdosta State 10-0 in the second quarter, the J.C. Smith tailback was hit behind the line of scrimmage by Blazers linebacker Tyler Morehead on third-and-1 at the Blazers' 28. Instead of going down for a loss, Smith powered through for a 4-yard gain and a fresh set of downs. The Golden Bulls scored four plays later and rallied to a 28-16

win.

A redshirt freshman, Smith paced JCSU with 98 yards on 19 carries, including a 58-yard gallop that led to a game-clinching 13-yard touchdown pass from Kelvin Durham to Reggie Daniel in the fourth.

"I am a very physical person," Smith. "It's football. A lot of the guys will tell you that I love physicality. That's

my main focus, really."

That fourth-down play justified the decision to make Smith, a redshirt freshman, the starter.

"We go back to that Valdosta State game at a very big turning point," Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers said. "They had a linebacker that was a Georgia Tech transfer, and it was a big third-and-1 and a lineman missed an assignment. He met Bobby T. 3 yards in the backfield, and Bobby T. got rid of him ... on that carry. That was the

changing point of that ball game. We kept that drive alive, went on the score, never looked back."

Smith, who is third among CIAA players in rushing yards (532) on 110 carries with five touchdowns, certainly isn't. Flowers prefers rotating runners, and Smith gets the majority for JCSU (6-1, 3-1), which plays Winston-Salem State at McGirt Field Saturday. He seized the starting job in preseason drills from a couple of more experi-

Please see JCSU'S | 6A



Another loss and fortunes sink for 49ers

By Cameron Williams

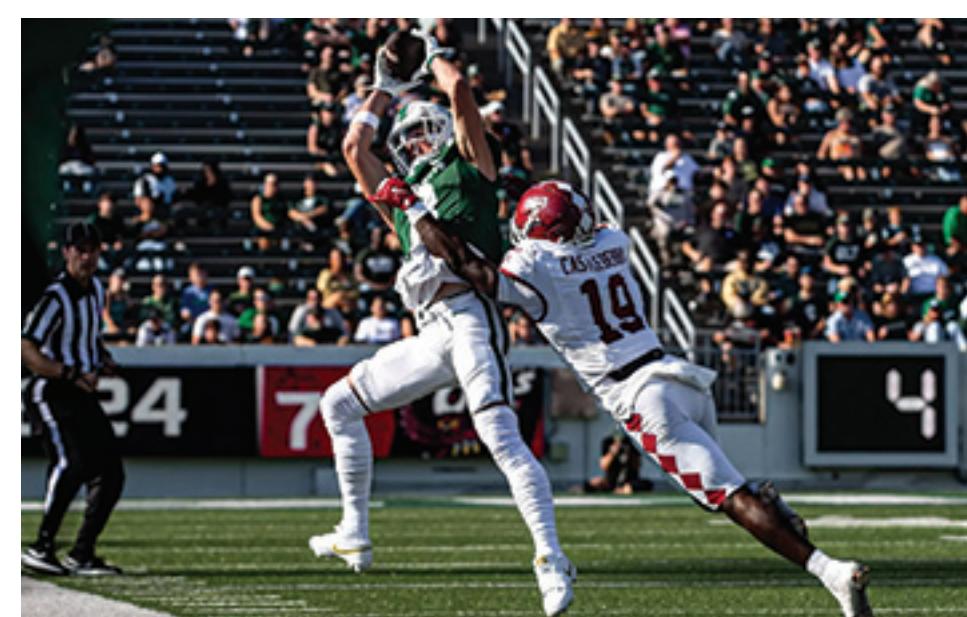
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Another week, another loss for the Charlotte 49ers.

This time, a 49-14 result against Temple at Jerry Richardson Stadium, their fourth straight homecoming loss. Charlotte hasn't won a homecoming game since 2021 against Rice.

After a promising start, the 49ers couldn't keep pace with the Owls in a game that close for a quarter. Down 14-7, Charlotte was driving when quarterback Grayson Loftis threw a hitch route that Temple defender Adrian Laing jumped for a 64-yard pick-six. That play changed the game's complexion so much the 49ers couldn't overcome and left

Please see LOSSES | 6A



Charlotte wide receiver Sean Brown grabs a pass in the 49ers' 49-14 loss to Temple Oct. 18, 2025 at Jerry Richardson Stadium. The loss extends Charlotte's homecoming losing streak to four.

Front and center for CIAA football

There was a time when October couldn't come fast enough. CIAA football was as boring as watching another cut-in of Taylor Swift at a Kansas City Chiefs football game.

October brought basketball media days which meant the season was just around the corner.

Back in the early 2000s, the conference had one dominant team, one or two half-decent squads and then everybody else. By late September, we already knew who was headed to the championship game.

The CIAA's record against nonconference Division II teams was so embarrassing, it became a running joke. Basketball season couldn't come fast enough. The scale started to shift with Winston-Salem State under former coach Connell Maynor. The Rams' historic trip to the 2012 DII national cham-

BONITA
BEST

No. 1 Hough squares off against No. 3 Myers Park

By Herbert L. White

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Hough High has one more hurdle to its spot atop the Magnificent Seven.

The undefeated Huskies have made quick work of Mecklenburg County competition on their way to the No. 1 spot, but Friday's game at No. 3 Myers Park has the earmarks of a more competitive clash. The winner takes sole possession of first in the Greater Charlotte 7A/8A final as the regular season flashes toward.

West Charlotte is in a familiar spot in sec-

ond and with Palisades' loss to Providence last week, Myers Park, Independence and Olympic moved to third, fourth and fifth respectively. There's a newcomer to the rankings in Providence, which debuts at No. 6, followed by Palisades.

This week's Magnificent Seven, with overall and conference record as well as previous week's rank:

1. Hough (8-0, 3-0 Greater Charlotte, first). Another week, another convincing win, this time 42-10 against South Mecklenburg. Friday's tilt against No. 3 Myers Park will deter-

mine the conference title and perhaps a top seed in the postseason.

2. West Charlotte (6-2, 3-0 Meck Power Six, second). The Lions are on a definite roll with five straight wins after a 1-2 start. Next up is an old foe in the Chambers Cougars.

3. Myers Park (7-1, 3-0 Greater Charlotte, fifth). The Mustangs have been very impressive to this point. Will they have anything for top ranked Hough when the Huskies roll into southeast Charlotte?

4. Independence (6-2, 2-1 Meck Power Six, Please see NO. 1 | 6A

Please see FOOTBALL'S | 6A



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

J.C. Smith running back Bobby T. Smith (14) runs past Shaw defenders in the Golden Bulls' 52-0 win against Shaw on Oct. 18, 2025 at Durham County Stadium. Smith, a redshirt freshman, is third in rushing yards among CIAA runners with 532 with five touchdowns on 110 carries.

JCSU's Bobby Smith embraces physicality

Continued from page 5A

enclosed teammates who shared carries on last year's 8-2 squad.

"He won the starting job in training camp," Flowers said. "He beat out UNC transfer Kamarro Edmonds. He beat out Avante George. We believe in competition every day and... he beat those guys out. Then, both of them have gotten hurt. But Bobby T. did win the job. He's going to be modest. He wasn't going to tell you that. I'll tell you; Bobby T. beat them older guys out."

Brown credits Edmonds and George with pushing him to become a more complete back who is a receiving threat (seven receptions, 77 yards and a score) when called upon.

"My older guys, those two, they drive me so much," Smith said. "Because of

them, I'm very productive. They help me do a lot of the things, they taught me a lot since I've been here and I respect them. I appreciate them for that. And like coach talks about production, I've got to produce every play, or I could lose my spot, too. That's what drives me to perform."

Part of what makes Smith, who is 5-10, 210 pounds, effective is physicality. As a competitive weightlifter at Boynton Beach (Fla.) High, he uses a combination of strength and leverage to his advantage.

"He was a power lifter in high school," Flowers said. "As a junior, I think he was runner up in the state in bench, power lifting, squat. So, this physicality that he has, he's had it. It's natural for him."

Golden Bulls lean into 'go get it mentality' for CIAA

Continued from page 5A

we're looking to build at JCSU - a program that's going to consistently challenge for championships."

Smith moved the ball efficiently after a slow start. Quarterback Kelvin Durham (15-of-28 passing, 281 yards) tossed three touchdown strikes and ran for another score while receivers Deandre Proctor (six receptions, 106 yards, 2 TDs) and Brian Lane (four catches, 146 yards, TD) broke Shaw's secondary. The ground attack, paced by Bobby Smith's 60 yards and a touchdown on 15 carries, provided balance with 125 yards on 31 tries.

"We misread some blocking and pre-snap reads, and then it just carried over for a couple of series," Flowers said. "We've got to get back to work on that. We controlled the slow start, and we've

got to do better but once we got rolling, we did turn it on some."

The special teams completed the rout with Isaiah Perry returning second half kickoff 90 yards for a touchdown, making him the first Golden Bull to do it twice in a single season.

"We've all got this go get it mentality," Haynes said, "so we are just doing the extra things to get ready for the Winstons and Fayettevilles and things like that, for us to come out and dominate."

Said Flowers: "Our young men know the importance of having good days of practice and bringing those good days into game day so that we can have a good performance, because one thing that we know is that if we play well, we're going to give ourselves an opportunity to win."

No. 1 on line with Huskies at Mustangs

Continued from page 5A

sixth). Only appropriate reaction to the Patriots' 35-0 mauling of Mallard Creek is "holy smokes." That's the way to send a message with North Mecklenburg on the horizon.

Olympic (6-2, 5-0 Greater Metro 6A/7A, seventh). The Trojans' six-game win streak is the second longest among the Magnificent Seven, and that trend is worthy of moving up the ranks. Off next to Berry Academy for a conference scrap.

Providence (5-3, 3-0 Southwestern 7A/8A, not ranked). Welcome to the club, Panthers. After starting 1-3, Providence is on a four-game tear that includes last week's win against previous third-ranked Palisades to take control of the Southwestern race.

Palisades (5-3, 2-1 Southwestern 7A/8A, third). The Pumas lost a 34-28 overtime thriller to Providence to fall three places. Next is a road test at Rocky River.

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Football's front and center ahead of CIAA basketball

Continued from page 5A

pionship game opened a lot of cheap athletic directors' eyes of what's possible when you open your wallet.

Bowie State's rise to prominence under former coach Damon Wilson further raised the conference's football profile. The Bulldogs advanced to four straight NCAA appearances from 2017 to 2021 (the 2020 season was canceled.) Their '21 season is reminiscent of Virginia Union's '24 season. BSU defeated Lenoir-Rhyne and Newberry before losing to Valdosta State in the quarterfinals.

The Panthers defeated Wingate and Lenoir-Rhyne - on the road - before losing to Valdosta State last year.

Things have changed in the C.I. October no longer means basketball season is near, but that football season still has a good half to go. And look who is back atop the food chain.

Fayetteville State (4-0) and Virginia Union are for the top spot. The Broncos lost their first three games on the road at Benedict, which is still undefeated; UNC Pembroke; and N.C. Central. Had coach Richard Hayes lost his Midas touch?

FSU has since defeated Elizabeth City State, Virginia State, Bowie State and Livingstone. With two of its last three games at home, the Broncos may well be on their way to a seventh championship appearance in eight years.

Too bad FSU and Virginia Union don't play each other during the regular season. The Panthers' (4-0) only nonconference loss was at a good Edward Waters team under new coach Brian Jenkins.

VUU's remaining games are Bowie State, at Bluefield State and the season finale against hated rival Virginia State.

The coaches predicted a VUU vs. Johnson C. Smith championship matchup. After winning their first three games, the Golden Bulls lost to the Panthers. Now, VUU holds the tiebreaker if they are tied at the end of the season.

For JCSU, it's déjà vu. The same rivals that knocked the Golden Bulls out of the championship game last season are on tap: after Winston-Salem State on Saturday, it's Fayetteville State and Livingstone.

The Blue Bears had a chance to start 3-0 in the conference for the first time since the Rudy Abrams days, but then-winless Elizabeth City State had other ideas. And critics might point to their conference wins against Bowie State and Lincoln, who are a combined 2-12.

LC can silence those voices with a win at Fayetteville. If not, the Blue Bears can always play spoiler when they head to JCSU Nov. 9 in the regular season finale.

THEN, it's basketball season. Bonitta Best is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.

Hill dismissal sinks in for 49ers

By Cameron Williams

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The Charlotte 49ers are looking for a new athletics director after relieving Mike Hill of his duties last week.

According to a statement from the school the decision was made after "... careful deliberation and in recognition that the rapidly evolving business, regulatory and competitive landscape of higher education athletics demands a new approach and renewed strategic foundation."

"Over the past seven years, Mike has led our athletics department with deep commitment," Chancellor Sharon Gaber said. "He played a pivotal role in many important advances for our athletics department, including the move to the American Conference."

"He played a pivotal role in many important advances for our athletics department, including the move to the American Conference. His hiring of Head Football Coach Tim Albin has also set us on a path toward success. We deeply appreciate Mike's service, dedication and contributions, and we wish him the very best in his future endeavors."

While the school is in the process of finding the next athletic director, Vice Chancellor for institutional integrity and general counsel Jesh Humphrey will oversee the department until the next hire is made.

"It has been an absolute

joy for me and my family to be a part of Niner Nation,"

Hill said in a statement. "I am forever grateful to Phil Dubois for the opportunity to lead this program and to Sharon Gaber who leads the university with such vision and strength.

"Thank you to our coaches, student-athletes and staff who work so tirelessly to represent Charlotte with pride and class. I'll truly miss you. We will be joining our incredible fans in cheering you on and celebrating many championships to come."

Hill, who signed a four-year contract extension in 2024, has a buyout clause that requires a \$2.2 million payment if he isn't fired for cause.

Hill was a lightning rod for Charlotte alumni and fans who criticized the school's lack of success in football and men's basketball during his tenure. In a May 2024 episode of the Sports Charlotte podcast, Hill responded that non-revenue sports like baseball, softball and soccer were just as important.

"I get that you say people don't pay attention to track and field," he said. "I'm the director of athletics, not just football and basketball. And I know that those are the sports that people pay most attention to, but you

have to build a culture of excellence in everything that you do here. And I think we are well on our way to having a program where every single one of our sports can excel at a high level."

Hill was responsible for the hiring of football coaches Will Healy, Biff Poggi and most recently Tim Albin, who is in his first season. After a 7-6 debut campaign, Healy managed just eight wins the next three seasons and was fired in 2022 after starting 1-7. Poggi, who was hired in 2022, came in with high hopes, finished 3-9 in his first season and was dismissed in November 2024 with a 6-16 record. Albin is 1-6 in his first season.

Hill was also responsible for the hiring two men's basketball coaches. Ron Sanchez was hired in 2018 and led the 49ers to the CBI postseason title. His overall record at Charlotte was 72-78, 39-51 record in conference play.

When Sanchez left to return to Virginia as an assistant coach, Hill named Charlotte assistant Aaron Fearne interim coach. Fearne led the 49ers to a third-place finish in the American conference in his first year with a 19-12 record. Charlotte finished his second season 11-22.

Losses accumulate for 49ers

Continued from page 5A

coach Tim Albin searching for answers.

"We missed the hitch route, and they picked it," he said. [It was the] right read. It's a pick-six, and we couldn't overcome it. Part of my message to the team (was) to have the mental toughness and grit to wipe it away and fight to stop it. It's not trying to be cute, you know. But I said it in a presser on Tuesday, I need the device from 'Men in Black,' with the glasses and they forgot everything."

Albin's teams at Ohio before had those moments when they overcame mistakes to win games, something he hopes to apply at Charlotte.

"It's tough to say, but I had guys throw four picks in the first half, and we end up winning," Albin said. "I've had Nathan Rourke. He's the best player in the CFL, the best player hands down, and he had two pick-sixes in the first quarter. We battled back to win a game, so I've been in some tough things, and we found that we've had the resilience and the toughness and the

grit to get past it... I don't have all the answers. I'm best when it's an open dialogue."

Saturday's loss caps a difficult week at Charlotte. Thursday's firing of athletics director Mike Hill took coaches by surprise and media weren't allowed to ask Albin about his departure, but he did give a statement.

"I'd like to start by thanking Mike Hill for believing Brooke and I and giving us a chance to lead this program here at Charlotte," Albin said. "He's a friend. He will remain a friend and has contributed greatly to our 49er athletics program. I wish him and Jess and his entire family all the best in their next chapter."

"As we look ahead, I want to be perfectly clear, we are fully aligned with Chancellor [Sharon] Gaber and the vision she has for this university and the athletic department. Our focus remains squarely on the success of our student athletes and elevating this program and institution."

The Charlotte Post

SPORTS CHARLOTTE

Podcast with a home team advantage