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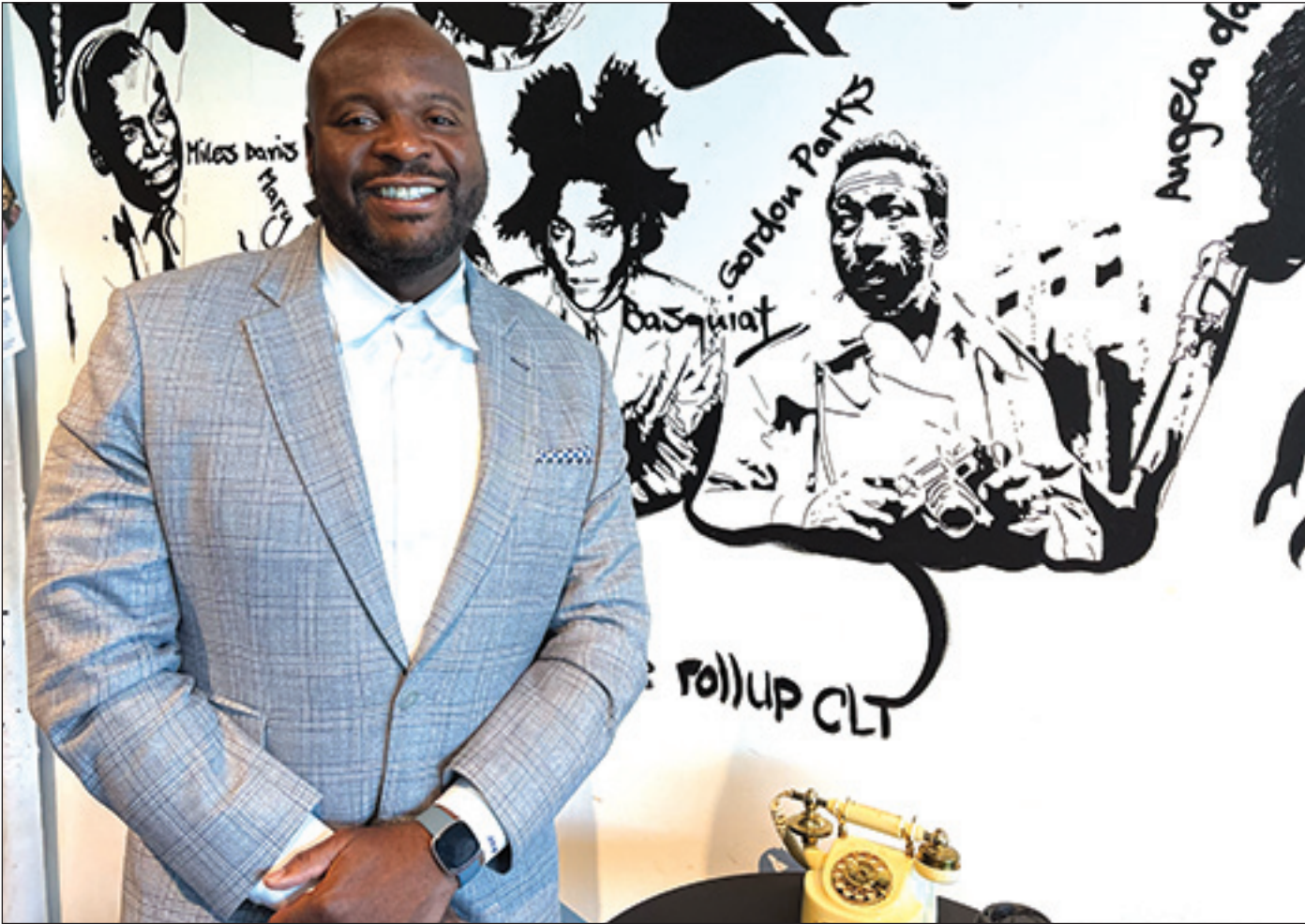
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HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte developer Shawn Kennedy is a partner in an \$8.3 million redevelopment of the former Excelsior Club site on Beatties Ford Road. Below: An artist's rendering of the two-story community gathering space that reimagines the historic Excelsior Club's role as a civic hub.

Excelsior legacy is 'what makes Charlotte so special'

Developer Shawn Kennedy reimagines historic landmark as a community space

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

The historic Excelsior Club is beyond repair.

Shawn Kennedy's vision is reimagining and preserving its spirit.

Kennedy, a Charlotte developer and partner Tim Sittema are leading an \$8.3 million project to build a new Excelsior — this time as a two-story gathering space on an .84-acre site on Beatties Ford Road.

Since the club shut down in 2016 due to disrepair, other developers have tried and failed, but Kennedy, a serial entrepreneur whose Kennedy Property & Development specializes in affordable workforce housing, believes he'll succeed.

"In eight months, we've gotten further than anybody's gotten in 10 years," he said. "The difference is we're local. We are in this community, and the last group just had a bigger project. They were doing a much larger hotel and everything else for a while. We are just



KENNEDY PROPERTY & DEVELOPMENT

coming back with Excelsior, so a lot of the obstacles they ran into — parking and all that — we're not running into those obstacles because we're not doing such a large project, so that's the difference.

"But again, with anything, you've got to work your butt off."

California developer Darius Anderson, who bought the foreclosed property
Please see **EXCELSIOR** | 2A

Voters put 1% transit sales tax on track

By Herbert L. White
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By approving a 1% transportation sales tax, Mecklenburg County voters delivered on local investment in transportation infrastructure.

The referendum, which passed with 54% of votes cast, would raise the county sales tax from 7.25% to 8.25%. A coalition of business and civic leaders backed the measure, which commits Mecklenburg to funding roadways and public transportation. The proposed tax is projected to generate \$19.4 billion over 30 years for bus system modernizations (20%) road and pedestrian upgrades (40%), and rail expansion (40%).

"Tonight, our community chose progress," said Shannon Binns, founder and executive director of Sustain Charlotte in a statement. "By voting yes, residents affirmed that everyone deserves safe, affordable, and reliable ways to get around — no matter where they live or how they travel.

This is a win for working families, for public health, for clean air, and for our economic future.

We celebrate tonight — and tomorrow we begin the work to deliver on this promise together."

The referendum's passage would add:

- Bus stops that can be accessed by additional 450,000 people

Please see **TRANSIT** | 2A

Residents face the loss of ACA tax credits

By Clayton Henkel
NC NEWSLINE

As the federal government shutdown enters its sixth week, Democrats in Washington and Raleigh are urging congressional Republicans to work with them to extend tax credits and keep the cost of plans offered through the Affordable Care Act marketplace from skyrocketing.

Open enrollment for the individual health plans began over the weekend, with many North Carolinians experiencing sticker shock compared to previous years. At the same time the tax credits are expiring, premiums are also increasing sharply for many insurance enrollees.

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) told reporters on a conference call Monday that over the past five years, the number of North Carolinians who have access to health care through the health insurance marketplace has almost doubled. Nearly 975,000 rely on the program today.

If Congress fails to extend the enhanced subsidies enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands may no longer be able to afford their coverage.

"A 60-year-old North Carolina couple earning about \$83,000 a year could see their premiums increased by more than \$18,000 a year, triple what they're now paying," warned Klobuchar.

"It is simply a gut punch that too
Please see **NC RESIDENTS** | 2A



Klobuchar

She's the chief: Estelle Patterson makes history as CMPD's leader



CITY OF CHARLOTTE

Estelle Patterson, who spent the first 25 years of her law enforcement career with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police, returns as chief, succeeding Johnny Jennings at year's end.

By Herbert L. White
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Estella Patterson's law enforcement career is coming back to where it started.

Patterson was appointed last week as Charlotte-Mecklenburg police chief, making her the first woman to lead the department. Patterson, who was formerly Raleigh's chief until March, started her career in law enforcement with CMPD. She succeeds Johnny Jennings, who is leaving at year's end.

"I am deeply humbled and honored to return to Charlotte to serve the community and lead CMPD into its next chapter," Patterson said in a statement. "Reducing violent crime and disorder, enhancing community engagement, and increasing employee morale and wellness are among my top priorities. I look forward to working collaboratively with law enforcement partners and community stakeholders to make Charlotte one of the safest cities in the nation."

Patterson, who joined CMPD in 1996 as
Please see **SHE'S** | 2A

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Recycle



Excelsior reimaged as westside gathering space

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from state Rep. Carla Cunningham in 2023 for \$1.3 million, had grand plans for the Excelsior, which was founded in 1944 by entrepreneur Jimmie McKee when he converted a residential home into a social, activism and cultural hub.

Anderson, owner of Sonoma, California-based Kenwood Investments and a self-proclaimed advocate of historic site preservation in Black neighborhoods, secured financial support from the city of Charlotte, Knight Foundation and Foundation For The Carolinas as investment partners. He presented a site plan without specifics to city officials, then cited zoning rules, especially parking restrictions, with limiting his ability to proceed with a project that included a hotel.

The Kennedy-Sittima project by contrast, is more modest: event space for community meetings, outreach programs and job creation through free culinary certification training. It'll also include a restaurant, live entertainment space and a museum.

"I've met so many people that had their Sweet 16 birthday in there," Kennedy said. "Their church would meet there for events - the Easter egg hunts, the Thanksgiving dinners. There's so many people that Excelsior means so much to them."

That was the sentiment of Mattie Marshall, president of the Washington Heights Neighborhood Association shortly after the Excelsior was shuttered.

"We know the significance of the Excelsior Club, and we know the significance of our neighborhood, that we must preserve and protect them," she told The Post in 2017. "I am very optimistic that we as the African American community are going to come together to seek a solution that will be in the best interest of this historic club. We cannot, as a city, dismantle and just let go of our history. It's too important."

The city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County each approved \$1.5 million in funding and Kennedy and Sittima, managing partner at Crosland Southeast, have \$2.3 million in owner equity. The remainder will come from corporate and philanthropic sources.

"This is a three-legged stool," Kennedy said. "When we came into the project, one leg is the city, one leg is the county, and the other leg is the business community and the financial community. ... We have a national funder that we've been talking to since we acquired the property, and they let us know that we need to get at least one or two local donations, so that's what we're working on now."

Kennedy and Sittima are working



Marshall

In eight months, we've gotten further than anybody's gotten in 10 years. The difference is we're local.

Excelsior developer
SHAWN KENNEDY

on a two-year window to complete funding, demolish the building and start construction.

"The timeframe is getting a capital stack together," he said. "The big thing is we go in front of the [Mecklenburg] Historical Commission on Nov. 10, and that meeting, if it goes well, that would chop a lot of time off because they have the power to have us wait a whole year before we can demo the building. We've been working hand in hand with them for the last six months, taking a lot of insight from them, and they've been very helpful."

Kennedy said the project launched with the intent of integrating the Excelsior Club's wood and stucco façade as part of the new structure, but inspections revealed years of weathering and deterioration made the transition impossible.

"I wanted to keep part of the original building," Kennedy said. "I originally wanted to keep the façade of the building, and with the due diligence I've done in the building over the last few months, it can't be done. It's been well documented that there have been other people out there that wanted to keep from some of the façade in the building, but what they were unaware of, what state that the building is in, and they have never been in the building."

"A couple months ago, I met the Mecklenburg County Historical Commission people and people from the State Historical Commission to walk the building so they could make their own assessment. And after they made the assessment, they felt comfortable with the direction we were going."

"A lot of people need to realize the reason the Excelsior shut down in 2016 was due to needed repairs," Kennedy said. "It didn't shut down because of they weren't doing financially well. They didn't shut down because people weren't coming in. It shut down because the repair cost was too much for that current ownership to get it done and move forward. It's going to be a process, but I think now the community understands."

Kennedy, who moved to Charlotte in 2006 after graduating Morehouse College, met then-Excelsior owner James Ferguson at Kennedy's restaurant, Alure. The two struck up a friendship and Kennedy learned about the city's - and the club's - culture and history.

"I started becoming a frequent, frequent person at Excelsior, coming to talk to [Ferguson], and just sucking in the fish fry and taking in Dirty 30 Thursdays and seeing all the great things," Kennedy said. "And then in that process, I learned the history at Excelsior, what it meant to the community from him and everybody else in there and the energy in it, and then 2015 when he was leaning towards moving on, I was one of the few people that he asked to purchase it."

In a full-circle moment, Kennedy is close to realizing the proposal he passed on a decade earlier. There's risk, but Kennedy, who has developed affordable housing in west and north Charlotte, is determined to make the project work.

"You've got to know your roots are," he said, "so that's what makes this project so important, to show the kids, to show us as a community, and even show the people moving to Charlotte, that this is what Charlotte is. This is what makes Charlotte so special."

Transit tax referendum, Democrats carry ballot

Continued from page 1A

- 2,000 new shelters, benches, and waiting pads
- Micro transit zones consisting of 18 new hubs across Mecklenburg
- 89 new buses
- 12 miles of track for light rail, with 10 miles for Silver Line from Charlotte Douglas International Airport to Bojangles Coliseum and Owens Auditorium and 2 miles for the Blue Line extension from I-485/South Boulevard to Carolina Place Mall in Pineville
- 6 miles for the Gold Line extension, which stretches from Eastland in east Charlotte to Rosa Parks Place in the west
- 25 miles for the Red Line commuter rail from Center City to south Iredell County
- Silver Line rail extensions west to I-485 and east to Matthews and the Blue Line to Ballantyne if funding allows, and upgraded bus service in the interim

The Charlotte Regional Business Alliance collaborated with nonprofits to back the referendum. Corporations like Bank of America and Atrium Advocate Health as well as nonprofits Crisis Assistance Ministries and Urban League of Central Carolinas announced their support.

The referendum had critics, who chided the measure as lacking transparency in planning and its regressive tax, which will disproportionately impact lower-income people. Progressive advocacy groups like Action NC and Southern Coalition for Social Justice asserted the referendum didn't provide enough detail on what is included in the tax or whether it's permanent. also opposed the tax.

Grassroots advocates also have con-

cerns about a lack of diversity on the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority's board of trustees.

The transportation sales tax wasn't the only issue on the ballot.

Incumbent Mayor Vi Lyles, a Democrat, breezed to a fifth term with 70% of the vote compared to Republican Terrie Donovan's 25.8%. Democrats will occupy 10 of 11 seats on City Council with Kimberly Owens' win against Krista Bokhari in District 6. Owens, who lost a close race to Bokhari's husband Tariq in 2023, earned 56.4% of votes cast.

All four Democratic at-large candidates - Dimple Ajmera, Victoria Watlington, James Mitchell and LaWana Slack-Mayfield - were re-elected. First-time candidate Joi Mayo will succeed Tiawana Brown as the District 3 representative after garnering 73.7% of votes cast.



Ajmera



Lyles



Mayo



Mitchell



Slack-Mayfield



Watlington

Activists push federal court to stop North Carolina remapping

By Galen Bacharier

NC NEWSLINE

North Carolina civil rights groups on Oct. 31 asked a federal court to stop the state's new Republican-drawn congressional map from being used in the 2026 midterm elections.

The new map, which redraws U.S. House lines to grant the GOP a greater advantage in the northeastern 1st Congressional District, is already under active litigation. The NC NAACP, Common Cause of NC and two groups of voters have asked federal judges in two separate cases to consider the new district lines as part of ongoing lawsuits.

Their filing Friday asks the federal court to issue a halt on the new map. Can-

didates can begin filing for office for the 2026 cycle on Dec. 1; the deadline is Dec. 19.

"In light of these upcoming deadlines, and in order to promote clarity and minimize confusion, [we] hereby request the court issue a preliminary injunction enjoining any election from being conducted under the district lines set forth in [the new map]," attorneys for the groups wrote in Friday's filing.

They also requested that if a block on the map comes after Dec. 19, that the court "modify the candidate filing period."

Lawyers for Republican leaders in the General Assembly have said they will allow the ongoing suits to be updated with new district lines and will "defend

them on their merits."

The new GOP-led map flips control of the 1st district, a swing seat currently held by Democratic U.S. Rep. Don Davis. It came in the midst of a mid-decade redistricting spree across the U.S., as President Donald Trump aims to keep Republican control in the House. It would likely result in one additional Republican seat, bringing the state's representation to 11 Republican seats and three Democratic seats.

Opponents of the map argue it's a racial gerrymander, breaking up the power of Black voters in the historic Black Belt in eastern North Carolina. Republicans maintain the new map was drawn purely with partisan intent.

NC residents face possibility of losing federal ACA tax credits

Continued from page 1A

many families simply can't afford," Klobuchar said.

The enhanced premium tax credits enabled small business owners and self-employed individuals to afford coverage. But state Sen. Gladys Robinson (D-Guilford) worries that too could change if premiums rise.

Robinson said a family in her district earning \$60,000 a year cannot afford rising health care premiums along with rising rent, food and childcare costs.

"So, they will have to let that health care go," Robinson said. "And then their children will be sick. Their families will be sick. And it just will not work for families in North Carolina."

Daniel Ayers said when he made a career pivot during the pandemic from being a classroom teacher to a small business owner, he turned to the ACA for coverage.

He credits the ability to afford coverage in the marketplace with changing his life back in the spring of 2023.

"I got injured. I needed knee surgery and without the coverage I got through the ACA, I would not have been able to afford that care," Ayers said.

Ayers said as a small business owner, he would have been forced to delay treatment without coverage, possibly until the situation was much worse and required more invasive surgery.

On Monday, Ayers allowed himself to open up the healthcare.gov portal to take a look at what his 2026 premiums would be.

"To put it bluntly, I was stunned," Ayers said. "The cost has gone up so much, now I do have to face it. Will I go without insurance next year? Just hoping I don't get

sick or injured."

U.S. Sen. Ted Budd (R-N.C.) suggested on social media that the rising health care costs could be attributed to structural flaws in Obamacare, costly new drugs, and surging medical costs "tied to Bidenflation."

Robinson said Budd needs to remember the rural counties he represents.

"Those rural counties have farmers and small businesses, and everybody will be affected. While you work on improvements to the ACA, you need to make sure they continue to get health care coverage," said Robinson.

Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) has urged his colleagues to embrace a two-year extension for the enhanced premium subsidies. Tillis told Bloomberg Government last

week that failure to extend those credits would cost some voters their ACA coverage just before the midterms, a risky strategy for some U.S. House members facing re-election.

A KFF Health Tracking Poll released in early October found 78% of the public wants Congress to extend the enhanced tax credits to make the health coverage purchased through the ACA Marketplace more affordable. That includes 57% of those who identified as "Make American Great Again" supporters.

Klobuchar cautioned that with the open enrollment period here, North Carolinians are already pricing out their options, determining if they can afford coverage moving forward.

"This isn't a December problem. It's not a January problem. It's a now problem."



Robinson



Budd



Tillis

She's the chief: Estelle Patterson makes history as CMPD's leader

Continued from page 1A

president of her recruiting class, spent 25 years with the department in several roles. She started as a patrol officer before moving to the academy as an instructor and recruiter. She moved to Internal Affairs and advanced to deputy chief for administrative services and patrol services deputy chief.

"The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department has a long history of incredible leaders, who have collectively led CMPD to be one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the country and Chief Patterson will continue that tradition," City Manager Marcus Jones said. "Chief Patterson's deep experience with CMPD in addition to her recent experience leading the Raleigh Police Department made her an ideal candidate to continue CMPD's successes but also bring new ideas to further the agency's growth."

As Raleigh's police chief, Patterson oversaw the reduction in violent crime, including a 100% clearance of homicides in 2024 as well as the launch of a recruitment and hiring plan that cut the department's vacancy rate from 150 to 40 in three years.

Other accomplishments include creation of the Raleigh Police Foundation,

which raised \$4 million in two years to fund initiatives to lift employee morale.

Patterson, a member of the Army Reserve from 1996-2005 where she reached the rank of captain, served combat tours Kosovo and Iraq while twice earning the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service. A UNC Charlotte graduate, Patterson earned a master's degree at the University of Oklahoma and a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

"I'd like to congratulate Chief Patterson and proudly welcome her back to CMPD as the next Chief of Police," Jennings said. "She accomplished great things during her previous tenure here and I'm thrilled that she is returning to lead the department. As an internal candidate with external experience, she brings familiarity with the agency and already-established, strong relationships in the community."

Patterson's hiring was the culmination of a search process that include wider community input. In addition to City Council members, civil rights and faith leaders, neighborhood groups providing feedback, more than 600 CMPD officers weighed in through an anonymous survey.

Another 850 responses to a community survey were submitted.

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No progress in poor areas despite state tier system to spark growth

By Jane Winik Sartwell
CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

When economic developers from Anson County pitch their community to prospective businesses, they advertise its railroad access, its proximity to Charlotte, its airport and its available industrial sites.

What they don't mention is Anson County's official tier designation as one of North Carolina's most economically distressed counties — a cloud that's been hanging over county officials' heads since 2007.

That label is intended to help the county. More often, it does the exact opposite.

North Carolina's attempt to promote economic growth in its poorest, most rural communities is rife with perversities like this one. In counties rich and poor across the state, officials wrestle with the state's unique and inflexible approach to economic development.

North Carolina has been steadily adding both jobs and population for more than a decade, with the exception of during the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem, however, is that parts of the state are left out of that promising economic picture — with no way to join the fray.

What are distress tiers?

State law requires North Carolina's Department of Commerce to sort the state's 100 counties into three tiers each year.

In theory, Tier 1 is home to the most distressed counties. Tier 2 represents medium distress, and Tier 3 the least distressed. But Department of Commerce officials apply just four criteria on a countywide basis to determine which counties are placed in which tier:

- Unemployment rate
- Population growth
- Median household income
- Property tax base per capita.

Each year, there must be 40 Tier 1 counties, 40 Tier 2 counties and 20 Tier 3 counties — regardless of overall progress or decline in the state or local economies. This is a central assumption from which many of the system's issues stem.

The state uses the tiers in order to more prudently distribute its limited money to the counties that need it most. Or at least, that's the idea.

The funding that is officially impacted by tier designations includes public infrastructure grants, competitive business incentive programs and building redevelopment funds. However, many more state programs now rely on the tier system — including several noneconomic programs. Some private foundations and nonprofit organizations use it to deal with counties as well.

Tier 1 counties are given preference in their economic development grant applications and often receive higher state matches for local dollars. The One North Carolina Fund, a job incentive program, divvies it up like this:

- In a Tier 1 county, the local government must provide no less than one dollar for every three dollars provided by One NC.
- In a Tier 2 county, the local government must provide no less than one dollar for every two dollars provided by One NC.
- In a Tier 3 county, the local government must provide no less than one dollar for every one dollar provided by One NC.

The idea is that Tier 1 counties, like Anson, need the money more but have less resources to compete for it. They need the extra help. In some counties, however, that one-to-three requirement may still be too steep of a challenge for the county to take advantage of the program.

Although annual tier designations are usually announced late in the year, late changes in the data cannot always be captured, so a lag occurs between tier designations and potentially major shifts. The 2025 tier designations were announced in late 2024 and did not account for the economic disruption of Tropical Storm Helene, which hit the state in late September. The 2026 tiers will likely be announced in early December.

Key findings

Carolina Public Press analyzed publicly available state economic records on distress tier assignments, economic indicators and demographic information between 2014 and 2025, finding that:

- 20 of the 40 Tier 1 counties have held that same status for more than a decade. Even though the system was originally intended to promote economic growth, it has failed to move the state's most disadvantaged communities forward.
- 19 counties operate in a kind of permanent recession, posting unemployment rates 20 to 55% higher than the state average for decades.
- 13 of the 20 Tier 3 counties have held that same status for more than a decade. Many counties have become stuck, unable to progress to Tier 2, with Tier 3 completely out of reach for them.
- In eastern North Carolina, two distinct clusters of counties have remained in the most distressed tier since the system's inception, pointing to a regional economic issue that the system has been unable to address.

Saluting Dick Cheney's finest hour

Dick Cheney, who died this week at age 83, was one of the most powerful and controversial figures in modern American politics.

The former vice president leaves behind a complicated legacy — marked by the Iraq War, expanded executive power, and decades of polarizing policy.

Yet in his twilight years, Cheney performed an act of rare political courage: he stood against Donald Trump and, in a move that shocked Washington, endorsed Kamala Harris for president. That single act — rooted in principle rather than politics — may well be remembered as his finest hour.

Cheney's endorsement of Harris was not a conversion to liberalism. It was a declaration of loyalty to democracy itself. He did not suddenly embrace the Democratic platform; rather, he rejected the authoritarian drift that has consumed the Republican Party he once helped lead. Cheney understood, perhaps more clearly than most, how fragile our democratic institutions can be when power is placed above principle.

When he endorsed Harris, he wasn't crossing the aisle — he was drawing a line in the sand.

In his lifetime, Cheney was known for his stern demeanor and hard-right convictions. He was the architect of the Bush-era doc-

trine that justified preemptive war. Progressives saw him as the embodiment of imperial overreach. But in his later years, Cheney found himself cast out by the very movement he once helped define. His insistence that truth and constitutional order mattered more than personal loyalty put him squarely at odds with Trumpism.

When his daughter, Liz Cheney, joined the January 6th Committee to hold Trump accountable, she became a political exile in her own party — defeated in Wyoming by a Trump-endorsed challenger. Dick Cheney's support for her stance, and his unflinching criticism of Trump, made clear that the Cheneys' conservatism was grounded in respect for the rule of law, not blind allegiance to a man.

Trump's response to Cheney's integrity was predictable and petty. When Cheney and his daughter endorsed Harris in 2024, Trump took to his social-media platform to call them "irrelevant RINOs" — Republicans in Name Only — and mocked Cheney's long career in government.

He conveniently ignored that he had once praised Cheney for his toughness, even pardoning Cheney's former aide Scooter Libby in 2018. That reversal — from admiration to ridicule — captures the moral collapse of Trump's Republican Party. In Trump's world, loyalty matters more than leadership, and dissent is treated as betrayal.

Even in death, the divide remains sharp. As of this writing, Trump has not is-

sued a statement mourning Cheney's passing. His silence speaks volumes. Every living president — Democrat and Republican alike — has acknowledged Cheney's immense, if complicated, role in shaping American foreign and domestic policy. But Trump, consumed by grievance and incapable of grace, could not bring himself to offer even a perfunctory condolence. In contrast, Kamala Harris issued a thoughtful statement recognizing Cheney's "life-long commitment to American democracy," signaling that his endorsement was both meaningful and memorable.

For Democrats like me, praising Dick Cheney doesn't come easily. His record on war, torture, and secrecy remains indefensible. He presided over some of the darkest chapters in recent U.S. history. Yet history is often a study in contradiction.

Cheney's late-life transformation — his vocal rejection of Trumpism, his defense of the Constitution, and his willingness to put country over party — deserves acknowledgment.

Redemption doesn't erase wrongdoing, but it reveals that conscience can survive even in the most unlikely places.

Cheney's opposition to Trumpism was not rhetorical; it was existential. He understood that Trump's contempt for truth and law was incompatible with any functioning democracy.

"In our history," Cheney said in a 2022 campaign ad for his daughter, "there has never been an individual who is a greater threat to

our Republic than Donald Trump." Those words were prophetic. They came not from a liberal pundit or a Democratic strategist, but from a man who once stood at the heart of conservative power.

When Cheney endorsed Harris, he reminded Americans that patriotism is not defined by party, but by principle. His death closes a tumultuous chapter in Republican history, one where courage became a rare commodity. Cheney was never a man who sought applause; he often thrived on controversy. But in the end, he stood for something larger than politics.

For all his faults — and there were many — Dick Cheney's final years revealed the flicker of a statesman's soul. His defiance of Trump, his defense of democracy, and his willingness to speak uncomfortable truths earned him a measure of redemption. When he endorsed Harris, he stood not just against a man, but against the corruption of a movement.

In that moment, Dick Cheney — the architect of hard power — showed moral strength. And for that, history may judge it, rightly, as his finest hour.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) and his despotic minions have less than a fraction of Cheney's moral courage. They might reflect on Cheney's legacy as they continue to pay tribute to their unyielding leader.

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and author.

Sports as diversion in today's America

Touchdowns, aces, home runs and goals are terms associated with sports.

Each day, we'll hear one or more of these words used on television or radio.

And of course, we attend these sporting events and see them in real time.

Jim McKay, the late legendary ABC sports journalist said, "The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." That expression will live on forever. If you recall, "Wide World of Sports" was a popular show some years ago and that expression was a part of it.

Sports have a way of making us compartmentalize life. We forget what is happening around us. Our emotions run the gamut as we cheer for our favorite teams and players.

It is a billion-dollar industry, yet it is also a part of our psyche. We grow up with sports and the competition embedded in them. Winning and losing are a part of us.

Some will say that winning doesn't matter. Well, it does matter if you are keeping the score. Somebody will win and somebody will lose. That is just the nature of it.

We are in the midst of three popular sports now which are baseball, football and hockey. It is a fun time, and it makes for great conversations and bragging rights. The games people play make life a little easier, especially during these times.

It is a relief to talk about sports and not politics. After all, you won't harbor bad feelings talking about sports. I am not sure about politics.

The political climate in this country is fraught with detours, and postponements. We are saddled with indecision, and some would say inequality.

The government shutdown is now more than three weeks old. Each side is stuck in their position and not budging. As a result, a part of our American way of life has been compromised.

Families are beginning to feel the effects of tighter

budgets. Money in households is not flowing as freely. We don't say "keep the change" as much.

For example, daycare expenses once not a problem is now a problem. Parents are out of work because they have been fired or laid off.

If you are from another country and attend college in America, you are nervous and afraid every day. You are unsure as to whether you will be picked up and deported. Having the correct visas seemingly doesn't matter.

What is most troubling is that when you are taken, you are taken to undisclosed locations and justice is put off.

Recently, journalists who cover the Pentagon were

asked to sign new rules and regulations. If they don't adhere to these rules, your press credentials will be revoked. Chief Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said, "The policy does not ask them to agree, just to acknowledge that they understand what our policy is. We stand by our policy because it's what's best for our troops and the national security of this country."

Approximately 30 journalists have refused to sign the document. J.J. Green, national security correspondent at Washington news station WTOP said, "I've never seen that place not buzzing like a beehive." Green turned in his press credential last week. Television stations had to remove their equipment by

Friday.

So, with reporters leaving, we will probably see less interviews and less information about military activities.

The National Guard is gaining in popularity for all the wrong reasons. They have been sent to major cities like Washington, D.C., and Memphis, Tennessee. Why they are there depends upon who you ask. Some say it is because of crime and others say their cities are being targeted.

There are other cities that have been identified so we will see who is next. Here is a thought. Just turn on your television or listen online to sports. It will give you a momentary respite from today's troubles.



NCDOT TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING UPGRADES TO I-77 IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY

STIP NO: I-5718



CHARLOTTE – The N.C. Department of Transportation will hold two informal, open house-style meetings regarding the proposal to upgrade eleven miles of I-77 from the South Carolina state line to I-277/N.C. 16 (Brookshire Freeway). The public is invited to view and discuss maps and project information with NCDOT representatives. Both meetings will include the same project information.

The proposed improvements include the addition of express lanes, reconstruction of interchanges and non-interchange bridges, and addition of access points and direct connectors to the express lanes. The purpose of the project is to manage congestion by providing an option for reliable travel time along I-77.

The two open houses are scheduled at the following times and locations:

Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Johnson C. Smith University
Smith Tech-Innovation Center – Rm 322
100 Beatties Ford Rd, Charlotte

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Silver Mount Baptist Church
501 W Arrowood Rd, Charlotte

Project details can be found on the NCDOT project webpage <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/i-77-south-express-lanes/Pages/default.aspx> or by going to www.ncdot.gov and searching "I-77 South Express Lanes."

Interested parties may submit comments and complete a short survey on the project webpage. Comments may also be submitted by phone at **1-800-254-0498**, email i-77south@ncdot.gov, or mail to Emily Richards, NCDOT Public Involvement, 1598 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1598 by **Dec. 05, 2025**.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for people who wish to participate in this workshop. Anyone requiring special services should contact Emily Richards, Environmental Analysis Unit, at 1598 Mail Service Center in Raleigh; 919-707-6014; or edrichards1@ncdot.gov as early as possible so that 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.



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith football coach Maurice Flowers leaned on running back Bobby T. Smith (14) to deliver a career game with 113 yards on 31 carries in the Golden Bulls' 17-14 win against Fayetteville State on Nov. 1. The victory broke an eight-game losing streak to the Broncos and pushed No. 17 JCSU to second in the CIAA standings.

JC Smith's next mission: Win and in

Golden Bulls take on Livingstone for a berth in CIAA title round and school single-season wins record

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

Maurice Flowers' tears were from a place of joy.

And redemption. Relief? That too.

Johnson C. Smith's football coach got all three with the Golden Bulls' 17-14 win last week against Fayetteville State to break an eight-game losing streak to the Broncos and seize second place in the CIAA standings with a game remaining. In addition to closing within a win of locking down a berth in the title game, JCSU (8-1, 5-1 CIAA) can earn a school-best ninth victory Saturday against rival Livingstone in the Com-

memorative Classic.

"I was very emotional after the game because it's not necessarily about getting the monkey off our back of Fayetteville State," said Flowers, who joined Eddie McGirt (1969-70) as coaches with consecutive eight-win seasons at JCSU. "It's about how proud I am of our young men. They put in so much work. And just to come in this environment, to know that you hadn't beat this team, you hadn't beat them in three years since we've been here, and then also to know that we had a formula to win."

That formula - control time of possession and limit game-turning mis-

takes - still required a dramatic rally for the Golden Bulls, ranked No. 17 in the national Division II media poll and 18th among coaches.

After Demari Daniels connected with Xayden Watson on a 52-yard pass to put Fayetteville State ahead with 3:28 left, JCSU responded with a nine-play, 69-yard march.

Kelvin Durham (20-of-27 passing, 182 yards; 9 carries, 33 yards, TD) completed 4-of-5 passes for 27 yards and ran for another 27, in-

cluding a 12-yard scramble on fourth-and-9 to set up Bobby Smith's 6-yard run with 13 seconds to spare. JCSU dominated time of possession at 38:23, primarily by running the ball for 40 of their 68 plays.

"My day's been good," said Smith, a redshirt freshman who established career bests for carries (31) and rushing yards (113) in a game. "We came here with a purpose to win. We had to execute, no doubts at all. With the coaches preparing us and ... faith, and then my o-line, I appreciate my line. They do a lot for me."

Please see **JC SMITH'S** | 6A



Durham

Grit, determination pays in keeping Golden Bulls in hunt

By Cameron Williams
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

The odds were stacked high, the clock running low, but Johnson C. Smith got it done.

The Golden Bulls (8-1, 5-1 CIAA) went to Fayetteville with a CIAA title berth within reach and down 14-10 with 3 minutes, 22 seconds to play. The determination of this year's squad is at a different level, and it showed on the field with JCSU scoring the go-ahead touchdown with 13 seconds left.

There was a lot to be said of the Golden Bulls' 17-14 win.

The legend of Bobby T. grows

The go-ahead touchdown scorer himself, redshirt freshman running back Bobby T. Smith has quickly become one of JCSU's best offensive players. He probably needed an ice bath after 31 carries for 113 yards - both career highs - and a



Smith

touchdown.

"Bobby T has turned into our bell cow," Golden Bulls' coach Maurice Flowers said. "When we recruited Bobby T. ... what we did find out is that he was a top powerlifter. So, that means he is strong all over. I can't say enough about him. We have four tailbacks that are out for the season and Bobby T. is still standing. I'm just so proud of him."

Smith, who has gone over 100 yards rushing in back-to-back games, cred-

ited the link between himself and Flowers with his development and more opportunities to contribute.

"It feels good to have this connection," Smith said. "I know [Flowers] trusts me a lot because he let me come back. It just feels good."

Kelvin Durham is a **DAWG**

JCSU quarterback Kelvin Durham had one of the most composed game-winning drives ever against the Broncos.

He didn't get hurried, didn't rush or

Please see **GRIT** | 6A

Canales urges consistency to remain in hunt

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Carolina Panthers tackle Ikem Ekwonu lined up opposite Green Bay Packers line-backer Micah Parsons and at the snap instinctively stepped to his left and attacked the four-time Pro Bowler with an aggressive left arm block.

Parson bounced off the initial denial and tried a speed rush to the outside.

Ekwonu pushed Parsons to the ground as quarterback Bryce Young stepped up in the pocket and hit receiver Tetairoa McMillan for a 16-yard pass over the middle.

It was a rare offensive outburst during Sunday's 16-13 win against the Packers at Lambeau Field, but highlighted Ekwonu's work.

Please see **PANTHERS** | 6A



CAROLINA PANTHERS

The Carolina Panthers made do with another offensive line combination in their 16-13 win against the Green Bay Packers Nov. 2 at Lambeau Field.

Decisive Game 3 awaits the Crown

By Steve Goldberg
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Thanks to a resolute defense and crafty goaltending by Kristijan Kahlina in the penalty kick shootout tiebreaker, Charlotte FC's season lives another day.

After losing home advantage in a 1-0 loss to New York City in Game 1, the Crown regained it by claiming their first decision, which finished 0-0 in regulation play, at Yankee Stadium on Nov. 1. MLS announced on Monday that the kickoff time at Bank of America Stadium will be 7 p.m. and the only match on Friday.

Having Wilfried Zaha back in the lineup could not be overestimated, according to head coach Dean Smith.

"It makes a big difference," Smith said. "He's probably just topped up the MLS fouls ratio a little bit more with the fouls that were on him today. And another lad got a caution for fouling so much so, he's got that extra touch of quality. You saw that in the first half, at times in the second half, where he got around (NYC defender Tavon) Gray."

Zaha was fouled six times, more than twice any NYC player. Charlotte's Djibril Diani suffered four fouls. NYC com-

Please see **DECISIVE** | 6A

Jaycee Horn cements reputation as an elite corner

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Josh Reynolds' was 3 yards ahead of Carolina Panthers cornerback Jaycee Horn and looking for the ball.

When the New York Jets receiver looked back at the Panthers' 6 for Tyrod Taylor's pass, Horn was at the 9. Help approached, but safety Tre'veon Moehrig trailed by 5 yards.

For a struggling franchise that has not reached the playoffs since 2017, the Panthers' moment appeared familiar: the defense yields a big play and allows an opponent to take con-



Horn

trol. Not this time.

Darius Butler called out Horn's closing effort, resulting in an athletic, one-handed interception, on the "Pat McAfee Show."

"This is what you call not panicking ... going up, high pointing this thing with one hand," Darius Butler, a nine-year NFL veteran said. "Not only getting an interception but getting a one-hander."

"This is absolutely nasty."

It was the first of two Horn pickoffs in Carolina's (4-3) 13-6 win.

And highly rated by the Panthers' offensive playmakers.

"Aw, man, that was a 10 out of 10," running back Trevor Etienne said. "It was a critical mo-

ment in the game. We needed a turnover, and he made a great play on the ball."

Jimmy Horn Jr. echoed his fellow rookie.

"I give it a 10 out of 10," the wide receiver said. "The ball-tracking ... he chased it down. He got it."

"I take my hat off to him," wide receiver Tetairoa McMillan added. "It was nice."

Horn playing up to contract

Walking through the locker room after a recent practice, Horn was asked what his father, Joe, said about the one-handed catch.

"He said it was a good play," Horn said with a grin and a shrug. "He didn't give me much props for it."

Please see **JAYCEE** | 6A



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith players celebrate after beating Fayetteville State 17-14 Nov. 1, 2025. The Golden Bulls improved to 8-1, 5-1 in the CIAA with the win and can set a single season wins record with a victory next week against Livingstone.

Grit, determination pays in Golden Bulls’ rise

Continued from page 5A

force passes that weren’t there. He simply marched Smith down the field, and had the most crucial play of the drive, scampering for 12 yards on fourth and 9 to keep the Golden Bulls’ chances alive.

“KD is a dude,” Flowers said. “I said this in training camp, that we weren’t seeing the best out of him in practice. The best thing about Kelvin Durham is that he is a competitor. He competes like I’ve never seen before, so when we were down, he came up to me and said, ‘Coach, let’s go.’ When he has the confidence that he does, I felt good.”

Durham was 20-for-27 passing for 182 yards and an interception. He contributed on the ground by rushing for 51 yards on nine carries and a touch-down. Flowers loves a good quarterback, and he certainly has one in

Durham.

Time to flip the page

The Golden Bulls will enjoy the win, no doubt about that. It had been eight years since the Golden Bulls did so. But “the school in Salisbury,” as Flowers likes to call Livingstone, would like nothing more than to end the JCSU’s hopes of playing for the CIAA title.

“We are going to look forward to it,” Flowers said with a smirk. “I don’t really want to delve too far into it, because I am going to celebrate [the Fayetteville State win]. But it is the Commemorative Classic, the first two teams to play an HBCU football game. And, then you add everything that is going into this one; it’s going to be a big game. I am glad it’s at home, but we are going to prepare and we’re going to look forward to it.”

JC Smith’s mission: Win and advance to CIAA title game

Continued from page 5A

Said Flowers: “We do that every Thursday – two-minute drill. It was really no panic. We just need to know the situation. Do we need a field goal? Do we need a touchdown and know the timeouts.”

Beating Fayetteville State did more than give JCSU its first win in the series since 2015. It exorcised the ghosts of 2024, when the Broncos broke up the Golden Bulls’ unbeaten season with a 27-0 win in Week 9. That loss was followed by a setback against Livingstone that pushed JCSU out of the CIAA title game, a hard lesson in perseverance the Golden Bulls have used since a

Week 4 loss at Virginia Union (8-1, 6-0).

“That’s just what I love about our young men,” Flowers said. “We’re experienced. We’ve seen a lot, and we’ve been through a lot. Just look at last year, look at the lessons learned. At this point, this is where we dropped two [straight], and to be able to just rebound from last year, such an emotional downer ... our young men wouldn’t let it happen.”

Smith agreed.

“Can’t happen again,” he said. “That was our mindset. ... We prepared for the moment. We can’t go short. We just had to execute.”

Decisive Game 3 awaits Charlotte FC

Continued from page 5A

mitted 16 fouls to Charlotte’s 13.

Much more in form than Game 1, Charlotte’s attack came close twice in the first half with both Brandt Bronico (19th minute) and Ashley Westwood (45) hitting the crossbar. In between, Bronico played a cross from the right that Idan Toklomati guided through his legs to the back post for an onrushing Harry Toffolo, who missed just wide of the left post.

Tactically, Charlotte strove to counter the reduced pitch dimensions by playing less out of the back to stretch out NYC. Also, not a proponent of his team taking shots far from the goal, Smith loosened the reins given the smaller confines.

“There was a green light to go and create opportunities and shoot,” Smith said. “Westy’s, I was right behind it. Just needed a little bit more dip, and he’s got a goal there. BB hit a great strike on the volley. I think Westy’s was just outside the box, BB’s was inside the box. So, good opportunities.”

Charlotte spent some quality time in their offensive third through much of the second half but could not create a goal. On the other end, Kahlina was coming up big on a hard open header in the 70th minute and a couple of more straightforward saves on the way to five for the match. Matt Freese had three for NYC.

“I thought players handled the ball a lot better” than in Game 1, Smith said. “Technically, we were better. We created some really good chances as well and looked more of a team today.”

Modern-day bulletin board material

Smith said he drew inspiration from the video scoreboards at Yankee Stadium. Admittedly someone who doesn’t know how to access social media, let alone read it, he noted, “I felt New York, and certainly some

of the messages I was reading on their board, they were very confident in winning this game today, so to go and get the victory – I know it’s on penalties – but now we take them back to the Bank, and it’s a proper elimination game right now.”

Kahlina saves

When it came to the shootout, NYC was first to take advantage. Archie Goodwin’s goal was matched by NYC’s Alonso Martinez. Then Matt Freese, NYC’s U.S. National Team goalkeeper, dove quickly to his right to deny Ashley Westwood’s low shot just inside the post. NYC scored their next two, as did the Crown’s Idan Toklomati and Harry Toffolo.

Julian Fernández then missed wide of the left post, which evened the tally. Zaha, Adilson Malanda, and Diani hit the next three for Charlotte, as did Justin Haak, Hannes Wolf, and Raul Gustavo for New York. Nathan Byrne did his job for the Crown, and Agustín Ojeda stepped to the spot. Kahlina dove to his left, putting two outstretched gloves on the ball at the lower corner of the post to knock it away and send the series back to Charlotte.

Eight players went to the spot for each side. Seven succeeded for the Crown.

“I won’t put it on myself, because my teammates score a lot of goals, and I just had one save,” Kahlina told AppleTV after the game. “But overall, I will not say that it was just my shine because they were waiting for me five, six times to save just one, and we will win. Thank God we had this. I saved one, and now we’re back home.”

Asked about waving at New York fans behind the goal after his save, Kahlina said, “Because they were behind me all the second half and speaking some Croatian words what are not nice. Just a word to them, like, ‘OK, we’ll be back at Bank of America. You’re done with home games.’”

Panthers stack good days with 4 wins in 5 games

Continued from page 5A

Two starts after generating a career-best three sacks, Parsons failed to register a quarterback pressure for the first time in his career.

“This is a player I respect so much (and) Ickey did a great job,” coach Dave Canales said during Monday’s video conference call. “You watch the impact Micah has on games. He shows up in every game. I was really our guys coming together and executing the plan that gave us an opportunity to be successful.”



Canales

Ekwonu and the injury-plagued offensive line helped Carolina (5-4) rebound from a 40-9 rout against Buffalo on Oct. 26. The Panthers’ defense also bounced back, limiting the Packers (5-2-1) to just one score in five red-zone trips.

Summarizing the collective effort against an offense that produced at least 27 points in six of their previous seven outings, Canales said: “Defensively, guys flying to the ball, showing up aggressively with violence. Derrick [Brown] again, just leading the charge. He had some amazing stack-monster plays.”

Since starting 1-3, the Panthers are playing their way into playoff contention. They proved they can beat the NFC’s top team (Packers), win on the road (two in a row) and play dominant ball at home (3-1).

But twice they performed like a rebuilding franchise that has not qualified for the postseason since 2017, getting run over by the Bills and New England Patriots. Their 26-10, season-opening lapse at Jacksonville could also be viewed as a dud.

With two winnable NFC South matchups approaching against the New Orleans (1-8)

Sunday and at the Atlanta Falcons (3-5) on Nov. 16, Canales, who often preaches the concept of players “stacking days,” said he expects the Panthers to start putting together consistent outings and a sustained run.

“Capturing the things that we learned: This is what our football (team) can look like when we take care of the ball,” he said Monday. “Capturing the style of play, I thought the style of play was amazing.”

“We just want to recapture that on a weekly basis.”

To celebrate Sunday’s upset win over one of the NFC’s top clubs, Canales, one day before the NFL trade deadline, granted the players their first “Victory Monday” since he was hired before the start of the 2024 campaign. The Panthers, who are over .500 this late in the season for the first time since 2019, have won four of five.

“I think it’s important with this stretch, as we’ve talked about, for every Sunday at 1 o’clock for a lot of weeks in a row and just wanting to try to give a little bit of mental space, the physical space, obviously, for recovery,” he said.

Looking ahead to Tuesday’s trade deadline at 4 p.m., Canales pointed to general manager Dan Morgan’s belief of building primarily through the draft. In his first season as GM, Morgan executed five trades in 2024. The preseason Adam Thielen trade to Minnesota remains Morgan’s lone deal this season.

“I also understand there’s a lot more that goes into it, but it’s got to be fair value, and things have to match up,” Canales said. “The need with what you’re willing to give up for and understanding that as we put this team together and as we build it, all those picks in the draft are really important for us as we continue to build this team.”

Jaycee Horn affirms reputation as an elite NFL cornerback

Continued from page 5A

The elder Horn played 12 NFL seasons, proving to be one of the top wide receivers during his era. The younger Horn, who signed a four-year, \$100 million contract extension last offseason, continues trying to prove he was worth the investment.

Butler, a host of the “Everything DB” podcast, pointed out a several things about the 2021 No. 8 overall draft pick.

“The only thing you can say about Jaycee Horn is, hey, you need some more ball production and just staying healthy,” Butler said. “And you’re seeing more and more of that this year.”

Entering 2025 with five interceptions over his first four seasons while missing 29 games due to injuries, Horn often displayed the physical tools to be an elite cornerback, but failed to back it up over consistently. He again proved to be the Panthers’ CB1 last season, dressing for 15 games and posting 13 pass defenses and one interception.

Insiders, however, questioned the price tag of Horn’s contract, which at the time made what some believed was an unproven commodity, the richest CB in league history.

Not coach Dave Canales, who relayed a previously unknown story about Horn. During the Week 3 blowout loss to New England, Horn suffered from a severe illness he didn’t want anyone to know about. His four-time Pro Bowl father told him to gut it out. He did.

“Just a really incredible competitor,” Canales said. “This isn’t public knowledge, but he went into the Patriots’ game pretty sick and he had to get some fluids and overcome that part. I didn’t find out about that until afterwards.”

“He just kind of said, ‘My dad called me and said, ‘look, nobody cares you’re sick, they’re going to try to go after you regardless. You’ve got to go out there and play.’”

“He played his butt off in that game.”

Horn ‘brings that mentality every week’

It would be fair to call Joe Horn an old-school player. He remains remembered for his touchdown celebration on Dec. 14, 2003. As a member of the New Orleans Saints, Horn famously retrieved a flip cell phone under the goalpost padding and pretended to dial and after scoring a touchdown.

Asked if he ever thought about channeling the act to pay homage to his father, similar to what Michael Thomas did in November 20218, the younger Horn said: “It’s tough. You can’t really tell when you’re going to get an interception and a pick-six is even rarer.”

“I’ve got to figure out another way to pay homage to him.”

One way would be to continue trending as a ball hawk. Horn’s three interceptions this season – two one-handers – rank third in the league. Despite opposing quarterbacks targeting Mike Jackson more often, Horn collected three passes defended and 10 tackles (seven solo).

“He brings that mentality every week, to challenge everything,” Canales said. “He wants to be at the point of attack. He wants quarterbacks to try him and he came up with two big plays (against the Jets).”

Capping his first professional two-interception game, Horn held near-perfect position against Reynolds on a go route. The Panthers’ secondary often plays zone coverage, but Horn found himself one-on-one. He reached up with both hands to end the Jets’ second-to-last drive, helping to seal the Panthers’ first three-game winning streak since the 2021 season.

Canales, a former receivers coach, preferred Horn’s technique on the second interception.

“I try to tell guys two hands for beginners,” Canales joked. “He doesn’t have a lot of catches in his pro career.”

« MAGNIFICENT SEVEN »

Hunt for playoff glory starts

By Herbert L. White

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It’s November, and that means high school football playoffs.

North Carolina’s tournament season kicks off Friday and every team in the Magnificent Seven is in the hunt for a state title, with No. 6 Providence and No. 7 Palisades the only squads to not earn a first-round bye.

Three M7 teams – Hough, West Charlotte and Myers Park – have an extra week to prepare in the 8A draw.

8A
(9) Palisades at (8) South Mecklenburg. The Pumas (7-3, 4-1 Southwestern 7A/8A) might still be steamed over losing the conference title to Providence but must pull themselves together for a road trip to South Mecklenburg (7-3, 3-2 Southwestern 7A/8A), which is looking to make noise against the No.

7 squad in the Magnificent Seven.

The Sabres are 2-2 in their final four games while the Pumas are 3-1.

(10) Ardrey Kell at (7) Providence. The Knights (6-4, 3-2 Southwestern 7A/8A), have an opportunity to add shine to a decent season.

All they have to do is take down Providence (7-3, 5-0 Southwestern 7A/8A) in a rematch of the season finale won by the Panthers 28-14. Providence is No. 6 in the Magnificent Seven.

(11) Chambers at (6) Pinecrest. The Cougars (4-6, 2-3 Meck Power Six 7A/8A) had more than their share of struggles in North Carolina’s toughest conference. Is that experience enough to knock off Pinecrest’s Patriots (8-2) which finished second in the Mid-South 7A/8A behind Richmond Senior?

First round byes: (1) Hough, (2) West Charlotte,

(3) Myers Park, (4) Mallard Creek.

7A

(24) West Mecklenburg at (9) Davie County. The 1-9 Hawks look for a huge upset when they take on 6-4 Davie County.

(20) Hopewell at (13) Butler. The Titans (4-6, 2-3 Greater Charlotte 7A/8A) showed some improvement this season. Can they parlay it into an upset when they go to Butler (4-6, 2-3 Meck Power Six 7A/8A)?

Bye: (3) Independence.

6A

(21) Ragsdale at (12) Olympic. The Trojans had a fine first season in the Greater Metro 6A/7A), going 7-0 in conference play and 8-2 overall.

They host a 3-7 Ragsdale squad that started the season 0-7 before closing with three straight Metro 6A/7A games to finish fourth.

Bye: (8) Charlotte Catholic.