

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

The Charlotte Post

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 12, 2026

VOLUME 53 NUMBER 10 WWW.THECHARLOTTEPOST.COM $1.50



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Everett Blackmon, access service manager at the University City Branch Library, shows off the Order of the Hornet proclamation and medallion at the Oct. 21, 2026, Mecklenburg county commissioners meeting. Blackmon has been an employee of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library for 45 years.

Over 45 years, he wrote the book on serving neighbors

Longtime library official Everett Blackmon earns place in Order of the Hornet

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

The final chapter on Everett Blackmon's service to Mecklenburg County hasn't been written.

Blackmon, the access service manager at the University City Branch Library, has been a full-time Charlotte Mecklenburg Library employee for 45 years. He was inducted last month into the Mecklenburg County Order of the Hornet, the highest honor bestowed by county commissioners for people who have displayed a high level of service to residents.

As a freshman at West Charlotte High School, Blackmon found the North Branch Library a quiet place to study and reflect. Library employee Vanessa Ramseur asked if he would be interested in cataloging books.

"I was hanging out in the library as a boy, 14 years old, and she asked me if I wanted to work there," Blackmon, 64, recalled. "I was just doing my homework, hanging out. She asked me if I was wanted to work there because the guy that was doing the cataloging as we were bringing our systems online … was leaving. I had some typing skills, and that's what they needed: someone to just measure the books, enter the information in the new computer system."

As a teen, Blackmon worked summers with the library system through a summer youth job program, then as a student at Johnson C. Smith University before landing full-time work. He went on to branches around the county: Sharon Road, West Boulevard Library, and the main branch in Center City among them.

He earned a promotion to circulation services manager and built relationships

Please see **LIBRARY** | 2A

City on airport contract: It's 'a win'

Council OKs deal on Charlotte Douglas; union criticizes pact

By Herbert L. White
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The city of Charlotte and airlines finally arrived at a deal for use of Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

City Council signed off Monday on a 10 1/2-year lease agreement, which in addition to American Airlines – which controls 90% of airline traffic in Charlotte – includes Delta, Frontier, Southwest and United. The pact starts Jan. 1, 2027.

The contract determines assignment of property rights, operations, maintenance and repair obligations, and the financial commitments.

"This agreement reflects a win for the community as it maintains CLT as an economic engine of the Carolinas, generating $40 billion in economic impact and over 184,000 jobs annually," airport chief executive officer Haley Gentry said in a statement. "The AULA is a partnership that helps ensure investments that position CLT for the future."

The contract:

· Increases the number of city-managed gates from 10 to 17, while establishing higher gate utilization targets to promote more efficient use of airport facilities.

· Includes a $2.1 billion estimated capital development program, CLT Beyond, an initiative of nearly a dozen projects across the terminal, airfield and airport campus. It will be funded through airport revenue bonds, passenger facility charges and federal grants.

· $3 billion estimated net airline rents, fees and charges payable to the airport.

· A 55% revenue share to the airport in exchange for airline operations investment at Charlotte

Please see **COUNCIL** | 2A

After the deluge: Making sense of altered NC political landscape

By Sarah Michels
CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Wake County voter Katie Kronenwetter voted in the Republican primary from 2008 to 2020.

But this time, she felt a little differently. Outside of Adams Elementary School on Election Day, Kronenwetter said she was "ready for a change."

"My ideology has changed a lot since the last time I voted," she said. "So it felt refreshing to vote for people that I fully believe in. I have just gone out of my small-town mentality that I grew up in, and have seen the world now, and so I'm ready to have people that match up with what I feel."

Later that afternoon, a Forsyth County voter said she came out to vote to "get MAGA out." She said she typically votes, but has never been as motivated as she was this cycle.

"The state of where we're at right now, it's getting crazy and very Hitler, Nazi-style in my opinion," she said. "And I'm a Republican."

Students stood in an hour-long line at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's Frye Center, waiting to vote. Several said it was their first time voting. One student said he came out because his best friend told him to vote. Another cited "the state of the world in general" as her motivation.

"Especially on this campus, I feel like I can't go anywhere without somebody asking me about it," one student voter said.

As the sun set, voters crowded into Fellowship Baptist Church in Alamance County. Everyone inside the polling place cheered as an election official called out, "First-time voter!"

One voter, Gilbert, said inflation and the economy were hurting everyone, and that motivated him to

Please see **MAKING** | 4A



KENNY OGBATA

Charlotte Latin School graduate Kenny Ogbata is one of two Black UNC Chapel Hill sophomores to earn Morehead-Cain scholarships.

Charlotteans earn Morehead-Cain sophomore scholarship at UNC

By Ashleigh Fields
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

As rollbacks on affirmative action and diversity in higher education continues, Black students from Charlotte are achieving at one of North Carolina's top schools.

UNC Chapel Hill sophomores Kenny Ogbata and Kevin Noble Jr. were selected as Morehead-Cain Scholars last month. They are a part of a class of 20 students selected for the scholarship, which is widely regarded as the first merit-based scholarship program established in the United States. It covers four years of undergraduate tuition, books, room, board, and semester stipends.

"This scholarship is the achievement I am most proud of. To me, this scholarship represents the hours of

Please see **CHARLOTTEANS** | 2A

M&F Bank shareholders OK merger with Optus

By Herbert L. White
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Mechanics & Farmers Bank is moving forward with a merger that will make it the nation's largest Black-owned bank.

Shareholders of Durham-based M&F Bancorp Inc. last week voted to approve a July proposal to merge with Columbia, South Carolina-based Optus Financial Corporation, the parent company of Optus Bank and Optus Merger Sub Inc., a subsidiary of Optus. Under terms of the agreement, outstanding shares of M&F common stock will be converted into the right to receive $53.30 in cash at closing.

The cash payment was increased to include the previous contingent cash payment of $6.73 per share since M&F's preferred stock has been repurchased.

"Today marks an important milestone for M&F and for the communities we have served for more than a century," James Sills III, M&F's president and CEO said in a statement. "Together with Optus, we will form the largest African

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Please Recycle

Library employee earns Order of the Hornet

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with customers and communities. Among the most appealing aspects has been learning history through collaborations like one he formed with the late Theresea Elder, founder of the Selma Burke Black Heritage Committee Blackmon chaired for 10 years. There were also work-related connections with archivists at the Main Branch's Carolina Room.

"It just it just grew over years," Blackmon said. "You meet people and you connect, and then you start figuring out what you have in common, which is a love of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the community, and community service. To be honest with you, many times it didn't even feel like work. It felt like just something naturally that I would do."

Libraries have changed over the years. Today they're digital hubs in addition to repositories for books. They're also more integrated into communities – whether it's through literacy programs or meeting places.

"Number one, we have more collaborative spaces," Blackmon said. "That's been intentional. We've also adapted in the sense of the way we deliver our products. Say, for instance, with books. Now we have online books for free. Yes, you can go and buy a service, but why when your taxpayers are already paying for it?

"Before, we got most of the information from books. … Even though you have Google and things like that, at the library the resources are more expertly chosen. You can trust it because that's the big thing about the public library, particularly the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, is the trust we've built in the community."

After 45 years, Blackmon gets asked often about retirement. He isn't thinking about it, though.

"Many people ask me that from time to time," he said. "My mom has asked me a number of times, when I was retired, which actually she would ask me when I would rest, and I told her I rest when I pass over, when it's time for me to go on to the other side. But in all sincerity, I love what I do."

Council signs off on airport deal

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Douglas and credit protections including debt service coverage requirements.

American officials contend the deal will continue airport growth through capital investment as well as connect Charlotte to more than 180 destinations across 27 countries.

"Our commitment to Charlotte is unwavering and what we've built here reflects sustained investment, strong partnerships and the dedication of thousands of team members who power one of the world's largest hub operations," Ralph Lopez Massas, American's senior vice president of Charlotte Douglas operations. "We're investing in our team, our operation and our customers in ways that will strengthen CLT and create opportunity across the communities we serve well into the future."

Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, which represents contract workers at the Charlotte Douglas, criticized the deal as a giveaway to corporate interests at the expense of passengers and lower-wage employees. American and its subsidiaries employ approximately 16,500 people in Charlotte, making it one of the region's largest employers. The union said the contract will ensure higher fares for travelers as well as leave service workers to endure unsafe job conditions, staffing shortages and lower wages.

"We showed up in good faith to be heard, only to be shown billionaires and corporations would once again be the only winners today," the union said in a statement. "We collectively walked out because we couldn't bear to have corporate interests prioritized over constituents once again, knowing full well that Charlotteans will have to pay the collective price for the time the city didn't take today."



CLAIRE MICHAL | NC NEWSLINE

N.C. Senate Democratic Leader Sydney Batch, D-Wake, speaks to members of the media after Senate session on June 10, 2026.

NC Senate Democratic leader sees a path to bipartisanship

By Lynn Bonner
NC NEWSLINE

State Sen. Sydney Batch, a Wake County Democrat and the leader of her caucus in the North Carolina Senate, may have one of the most challenging jobs in the General Assembly next year.

She'll likely be balancing the expectations that come from Democrats being able to pass anything they wish in the House with the reality that the Republican-majority Senate, where she serves, can scuttle all of it.

"We're living in a world where nothing's going to get done unless we get Republican support," she said, "so people need to temper their expectations."

Democrats will control the state House next year for the first time since 2010. Democratic leader Robert Reives, D-Chatham, is expected to become House Speaker. But Republicans will hold a majority in the Senate, albeit a slim one, with 26 seats to the Democrats' 24, according to unofficial election results. One race could still be subject to recount.

Divided control could be a recipe for gridlock, but Batch sees an opportunity for bipartisan accomplishments.

"It is going to be a challenge with us being at 24, but I do think that with every challenge comes a great opportunity for us to be able to finally sit down, reset in the Senate, and work with whoever ends up being their leader, to make sure that we can be an example here in North Carolina of a chamber that can govern in parity."

Republican Sens. Jim Burgin of Harnett County, Ralph Hise of Mitchell County, Brett Jackson of Sampson County, and Todd Johnson of Union County are vying to succeed Senate Leader Phil Berger of Rockingham County, who lost his primary.

Batch said she didn't have a preference about who succeeds Berger.

She said she has good relationships with many Senate Republicans, and will respect the decision they make about who will lead them.

"I will be more than happy to work with them to pass legislation," she said.

Batch has served nearly three terms in the Senate. She has also served one House term. She's been the Senate's Democratic leader for one term.

Democrats have seen most of their proposals dashed against the rocks of Republican legislative majorities for the past 16 years. Some of those doomed ideas have had widespread support from Democrats in both chambers. Some of those ideas still won't get past a Republican Senate.

Likewise, if Senate Republicans want their bills passed, they'll have to work with House Democrats, she said.

Batch said she'd like the legislature for the next two years to focus on making healthcare more affordable, to talk about housing affordability, and address returning academic freedom to higher education.

Some issues in the legislature already have bipartisan support, but have died in battles between House and Senate Republicans. For example, bills that would limit sales of edible hemp products to adults have passed the House and Senate, but the chambers have not been able to agree on details.

This is an example where the Senate being closely divided will matter, she said, because some Republicans will want to work on a bill that can pass both chambers.

With the potential for a closely divided Senate comes the speculation that a Republican will change parties. That would essentially give Democrats a majority because Democratic Lt. Gov. Rachel Hunt can break tie votes.

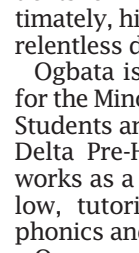
Batch said she has not spoken to any Republican about switching parties.

"Any of them want to change and be in our party — more than happy," Batch said. "But it will not be because I ask, and it certainly won't be because I'm offering them anything for it."

Charlotteans Ogbata, Noble earn Morehead scholarship

Continued from page 1A

studying, collaborating, working and brainstorming I have put in up to this point," Ogbata said. "My parents have always valued education and instilled in me the courage and discipline to pursue my passions. I believe the Morehead-Cain scholarship is not just an individual milestone, but a reflection of the support from my family, mentors, and educators."



Noble

Ogbata, a graduate of Charlotte Latin School, and Noble, a graduate of Mallard Creek High School, demonstrated leadership on campus that earned recognition from their peers and campus staff who nominated them for the competitive bursary.

Ogbata is set to lean into the experience while studying lymphatic vessel regulation in intestinal inflammation under Dr. Kathleen Caron and volunteering at UNC Hospitals. The teachers who mentored and guided him through school in Charlotte say the honor is no surprise for a student of his caliber.

"Kenny is an extraordinary young man who left a lasting mark on our campus with his intellectual curiosity, integrity and warmth," said Chuck Baldecchi, head of school at Charlotte Latin. "The Morehead-Cain Scholarship recognizes leaders who elevate the communities around them, and anyone who spent time with Kenny at Charlotte Latin knows how well he fits that definition. We saw him come of age in a Latin environment designed to challenge, encourage, and prepare students for moments just like this — but ultimately, his success is a testament to his relentless drive."

Ogbata is community service director for the Minority Association of Pre-Health Students and a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-Health Honor Society. Noble works as a Teach For America Ignite Fellow, tutoring third grade students in phonics and reading comprehension.

On campus, he is a founding member of Carolina College Immersion Initiative, which focuses on developing student-centered tours and highlighting resources for first-generation and low-income students.

"I want to thank the Morehead-Cain Foundation's selection committee for their time and consideration, and for recognizing my commitment to public service, educational equity, and contributing to the well-being of communities both within and beyond Carolina. I am beyond excited to be a part of such an amazing community…" Noble wrote in a recent post on LinkedIn.

"As I look ahead to the rest of the academic year, I am excited to continue growing as a student, leader, and advocate for educational equity and public service. I am incredibly grateful to the mentors, colleagues, and communities that have supported me along the way, and I look forward to building on these experiences, embracing new opportunities, and continuing to learn how I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of others," he later added.

Noble and Ogbata's class of Morehead-Cain Sophomore Scholars includes three Black men. No Black women were awarded a scholarship.

UNC's enrollment of Black students has fallen since the 2023 Supreme Court ruling that determined race-conscious admissions programs at Harvard and UNC violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, ending nearly 50 years of legal precedent that allowed colleges and universities to consider race as a factor in admissions.

Data from UNC shows Black student enrollment accounts for nearly 8% of the student body – a 23% decline.

However, the school and past Morehead-Cain Scholars have laid the groundwork to recognize the experience and tenacity of Black students. In 2024, the Morehead-Cain Foundation celebrated 50 years of Black alumni, gathering nearly 100 Black alumni, current scholars and guests for a reunion weekend at UNC Chapel Hill.

Members of the school community spoke to the testament of Harvey Kennedy, who became the program's first Black graduate in 1974, and Karen Stevenson became the first Black woman to receive the scholarship in 1975. UNC honored both Kennedy and Stevenson with campus portraits last year.

"Black Morehead-Cains are part of the collective, and the full story of the foundation is incomplete until our story is told, too," Ray Sawyer, director of community health partnerships at Well in Chapel Hill and a 2013 Morehead-Cain Scholar graduate said in an interview with the foundation. "In the time since Harvey's graduation, Black scholars and alumni have made irreplaceable contributions to Morehead-Cain, UNC–Chapel Hill, our state, and the world."

Stevenson, who went on to become the first woman from UNC and the first Black woman in the country to receive the Rhodes Scholarship, said the Morehead-Cain Scholarship taught her not to be defined by race or gender.

"One the great blessings of having been awarded the Morehead-Cain Scholarship was that I felt a great deal of freedom to pursue the things that engaged me intellectually and to not fit in any particular box," she said. "No one else can tell you what your path should be."

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M&F Bank shareholders vote for Optus merger

Continued from page 1A

American-owned financial institution in the United States, positioned to expand access to capital and economic opportunity across the Carolinas."


Sills

The merger makes the company the nation's largest Black-owned financial services institution with $1.27 billion in total assets as of March 31. Under terms of the deal, which is expected to exceed $105 million, Mechanics & Farmers' eight branches will operate under its current name for two years before transitioning to Optus. M&F's Charlotte branch is on Beatties Ford Road in Historic West End.

Sills will continue as CEO of the combined company, while Optus chairman Paul Mitchell keeps his title.

Greensboro-based Triad Business Bank made an unsolicited proposal last month to merge with M&F, but its board of directors continued to recommend the Optus deal to shareholders.

Closing the merger is subject to regulatory approvals, and the merger is expected to close by year's end.

"We are grateful to our shareholders for their strong support of the Optus merger," said James Stewart, M&F Bancorp's chairman. "[The] vote reflects our shareholders' confidence that this combination is the best outcome for M&F, and our Board thanks them for their careful consideration throughout this process."


Stewart

M&F, founded in 1907, was a mainstay of Durham's Black Wall Street and eventually opened branches in North Carolina's largest cities during a time when white-controlled financial institutions didn't invest in Black communities.

Optus, founded in 1921 as Victory Savings Bank, is one of the nation's leading minority depository institutions and a certified community development financial institution.

Jail North operating, but a solution for juveniles is still unclear

By Mackenzie Thomas
CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

The reopening of a Mecklenburg County detention center is relieving overcrowding and bringing more federal tax dollars back to the county, but the return of juveniles remains up in the air.

Mecklenburg County Detention Center North, or Jail North, reopened in September to help alleviate overcrowding at the existing jail, Detention Center Central. Formerly a juvenile detention center, Jail North had closed in 2022 due to staff shortages at the adult jail, but plans to reopen it have been in the works for months.

Its reopening is anticipated to lighten the burden on Detention Center Central, which had been reported as exceeding its capacity since May. The reopened facility could also lead to economic benefits for the county, as the arrival of federal inmates means federal tax dollars could follow.

However, whether juveniles will ever return to the facility remains unclear. The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office has been involved in discussions with the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice since Jail North's initial closure to explore this possibility, but as of now, the sheriff's office is focusing on issues like overcrowding and employment at the centers.

As juvenile justice facilities are facing their own issues with overcrowding, and many Mecklenburg County youth are having to be housed outside of the county, advocates continue to push for their return to Jail North.

Overflow inmates in Mecklenburg

The reopening of the facility was announced in May, with Mecklenburg County Sheriff Gary McFadden noting the severe overcrowding issues at Detention Center Central.

"To maintain the safety and security of our staff, residents, and the community, we must take immediate action to address the growing population inside Detention Center Central," McFadden said.

"As we move into the summer months — when crime tends to increase — reopening Detention Center North is a necessary step to help manage the overcrowding while we continue working through these ongoing challenges."

With a capacity of 1,791 inmates, Mecklenburg County's Detention Center Central has faced issues with overcrowding for months. In June, it had a population of 2,080, with more than 300 inmates forced to stay in overflow areas, sleeping on "stack-a-bunks." More than 80 inmates were waiting to be transferred to state prison.

In August, the population grew to 2,222 inmates, according to an update from the sheriff's office. It wanted to go ahead with the reopening to alleviate this, but hit a roadblock due to a budget issue.

To move forward with the reopening, the sheriff's office had to appear before the Board of County Commissioners on Sept. 1 and ask for approval to amend their budget.

"I want the public to understand that we are not sitting still," McFadden said in the press release.

"(The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office) is doing everything within its authority to prepare the North Detention Center for reopening. Once the necessary budget amendment is approved, staffing arrangements are finalized and the remaining inspections are completed, MCSO will be positioned to move forward to reopen the North Detention Center."

The sheriff's office has since been able to move forward with the reopening after commissioners voted to fund it. On Sept. 17, the first group of more than 200 inmates were moved over to Jail North from Central. While this relocation has helped, there's still more work to be done, as 189 inmates are still in overflow areas at Central. Of these inmates, 72 are waiting to be transferred to state prison, according to a September press release.

McFadden praised the jail staff at the reopened facility for "compassion and professionalism," as well as their "hard work and commitment" that made the transfer successful, also offering words of encouragement to the staff that remain at Central, who he said continue to work under "extremely difficult conditions."

The sheriff's office is still looking for ways to alleviate overcrowding at Central, but called upon county leaders to help with resources and potential solutions.

"My staff has done and will continue to do everything within its authority," McFadden said in the press release.

"Now, we need those who have the power to make critical decisions to assist us. The people who serve inside our detention facilities and the residents entrusted to our care should not have to carry this burden alone."

McFadden said he'd like to see more inmates from Central transferred to the facility in the future, but it will depend on funding.

"That is why we need additional funding because we need more staff," he said.

Federal inmates

Mecklenburg County hasn't housed federal inmates since 2023, following the decision to close Jail North. More recently though, it was decided that they would return, McFadden told CPP.

McFadden said the decision came about after first being approached by the federal government in February and asked whether he'd be open to having federal inmates return to Jail North. Now that a contract has been signed, roughly 66 residents are anticipated to be transferred to the facility, a process that began this week.

This transfer will mean more federal tax dollars are brought back to the county, since facilities housing federal inmates receive a per diem rate per inmate — a fixed amount of money from the federal government to cover the costs of each inmate — US Attorney Russ Ferguson told WBTV 3.

"This is good for the taxpayer," Ferguson told WBTV 3.

"Not only are we bringing money from other states here to Mecklenburg County to employ that money, to employ people — but we'll be saving money on transportation, U.S. Marshals going back and forth, saving money on opposing counsel going back and forth."

Future of juveniles

Currently, the primary obstacle to returning kids to Jail North is funding. It would cost $13 million to reopen the juvenile wing of Jail North, money that the state has yet to allocate, McFadden said.

In the meantime, the sheriff's office's priority is supporting employment at the detention center and continuing to address overcrowding, he said.

While Central has seen its population grow, so has the number of Mecklenburg County youth in secure custody, Frank Crawford, advocacy director for the Children's Alliance, told CPP.

As of the end of October, that number had reached 67 kids awaiting court action, while the average daily population from the county over the past year has been 57 kids, he said.

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Published weekly by The Charlotte Post Publishing Company Inc., 5118 Princess Street, Charlotte, NC 28269 (USPS #965500). Subscription is $65 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Charlotte, NC. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Charlotte Post, PO Box 30144, Charlotte, NC 28230

Making sense of altered political landscape in NC

Continued from page 1A

vote. But he wasn't particularly confident in Democratic policies. He just wanted the election to be over.

"Hopefully, whether Democrats win the Senate and House or Republicans, I have a feeling either way everything's going to change with the war, with the economy," he said. "It's just a matter of who gets there, and that's why we've been in this limbo for so long. That's what aggravates me."

From the top to the bottom of the ballot, Democrats won big Tuesday night, benefitting from an overwhelmingly negative national political environment for Republicans.

Moving forward, they will have to decide how they want to use their new leverage to govern North Carolina.

How big was the election wave?

"Blue wave" might not cut it. Tuesday night was more like a tsunami or a hurricane.

In North Carolina, Democrats placed one of their own in the US Senate for the first time since 2008 in a landslide victory for former Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. It was the widest winning margin since 1974. A least five Democrats flipped US House seats in a massive reconfiguration of North Carolina's Congressional delegation.

Republicans lost control of the state legislature, with Democrats gaining a near super-majority in the state House and coming one seat shy of an even state Senate, where Democratic Lt. Gov. Rachel Hunt could break ties.

Democratic State Supreme Court Justice Anita Earls kept her seat on the court by a wide margin, setting Democrats up to potentially retake the court majority before the next redistricting cycle.

The blue wave extended into local races across the state. In the mountains, Democrats won every contested seat in Jackson County, which means that overnight, the county commission shifted from an all-Republican board to a Democratic majority board.

In the northern Piedmont, Democratic sheriff candidate Dennis Allen ousted Sheriff Jason Wilborn in Person County to become the county's first Black sheriff. North Carolina Democratic Party chair Anderson Clayton, who lives in Person County, said Allen's win made her cry.

She said she thought she would be lucky to get a majority in the state House by one seat, break Republicans' supermajority in the state Senate and flip one US House seat. Election night exceeded her wildest expectations, and will give her the energy to keep her foot on the gas, she said.

"I felt like I was crawling to last night in some ways, and it gave me the rejuvenation that I needed to be like, 'OK, you can do another two years to flip the court to be able to see this through,'" Clayton said.

The signs were there, said Western Carolina University political science professor Chris Cooper. Everyone knew Democrats would win, but nobody predicted the magnitude of their victory.

"This is the 100-year flood of electoral waves," Cooper said.

Democratic win or Republican loss?

While Democrats swept most races, a few Republican policies also won the election.

North Carolinians saw three statewide referendums on their ballot when they went to the polls. One would enshrine current law, which requires all voters to provide a valid photo ID to vote, into the state Constitution. That makes it more difficult for a future legislature to change the law; to do so, they would have to return the question to voters.

The second caps the income tax rate at 3.5%. The rate is below that now, but the amendment, again, makes it harder for future lawmakers to reverse tax policy. The third constitutional amendment requires the state legislature to enact some limit on property tax rates upon local governments, although it is short on specifics.

The Democratic Party ran against the amendments. Clayton said their sample ballots asked voters to vote against them, and they put up "vote no" signs at polls.

But still, about 60% of voters approved each of the amendments. One Nash County voter told Carolina Public Press that she voted for all Democrats, but also for the ballot referendums. She was not alone.

To Andy Jackson, director of the Civitas Center for Public Integrity at the John Locke Foundation, that's a sign that the blue wave was more of a Republican loss than a Democratic win.

"This is a repudiation of Republicans, not Republican policies," he said. "… This national environment against Trump I think overwhelmed everything else this cycle, and so that's what you're looking at. I don't think there needs to be that much soul searching as far as policies go on the Republican side. They somehow need to be able to show themselves that, 'Hey, this stuff you voted for? Well, that's me. You should also vote for me.'"

Registered Democrat and Unaffiliated North Carolina voters came out in droves during early voting, while Republicans matched their 2022 midterm numbers.

Film looks at NC student voting

By Lynn Bonner
NC NEWSLINE

Some ballots haven't even been counted yet, but a documentary about the 2026 election from the perspective of North Carolina college students fighting for campus early voting sites has already had its debut.

"Where Do I Vote Again?" screened last week at The Rialto in Raleigh. It encapsulates the work of students who tried to convince election officials to locate early voting sites on their campuses. It also highlights the work of Influence NC, the nonprofit that held voter information parties at a dozen campuses and offered students rides to the polls at three of them.

The prelude: The Guilford County Board of Elections and state Board of Elections didn't give North Carolina A&T State University students the campus early voting site they wanted. The North Carolina State University site was moved from the centrally located student center to a building at the edge of campus that students argued was inconvenient. A push from the state auditor's office to prevent an early voting site at Western Carolina University failed.

The documentary didn't show all that resulted, but here's part of the postscript: A&T student marches to an early voting site made national news.

The WCU early voting site Republicans fought was the second-most used in Jackson County.

According to data from NC Election Live, voters ages 18-29 cast 11% of early ballots this year, compared to 5.4% in 2022.

The documentary featured interviews with students; Jeff Carmon, a Democratic state elections board member; Dallas Woodhouse, a Republican political operative who worked at state Auditor Dave Boliek's office advising counties on their early voting plans; voting rights advocate Bob Hall; and Gerry Cohen, a Democrat on the Wake County Board of Elections.

Boliek was recorded at an event sponsored by The Assembly and included his comments about locating an early voting site at Union Square Campus, a building used by A&T, UNC-Greensboro and Guilford Technical Community College.

Ahead Media produced the documentary in collaboration with Influence NC.

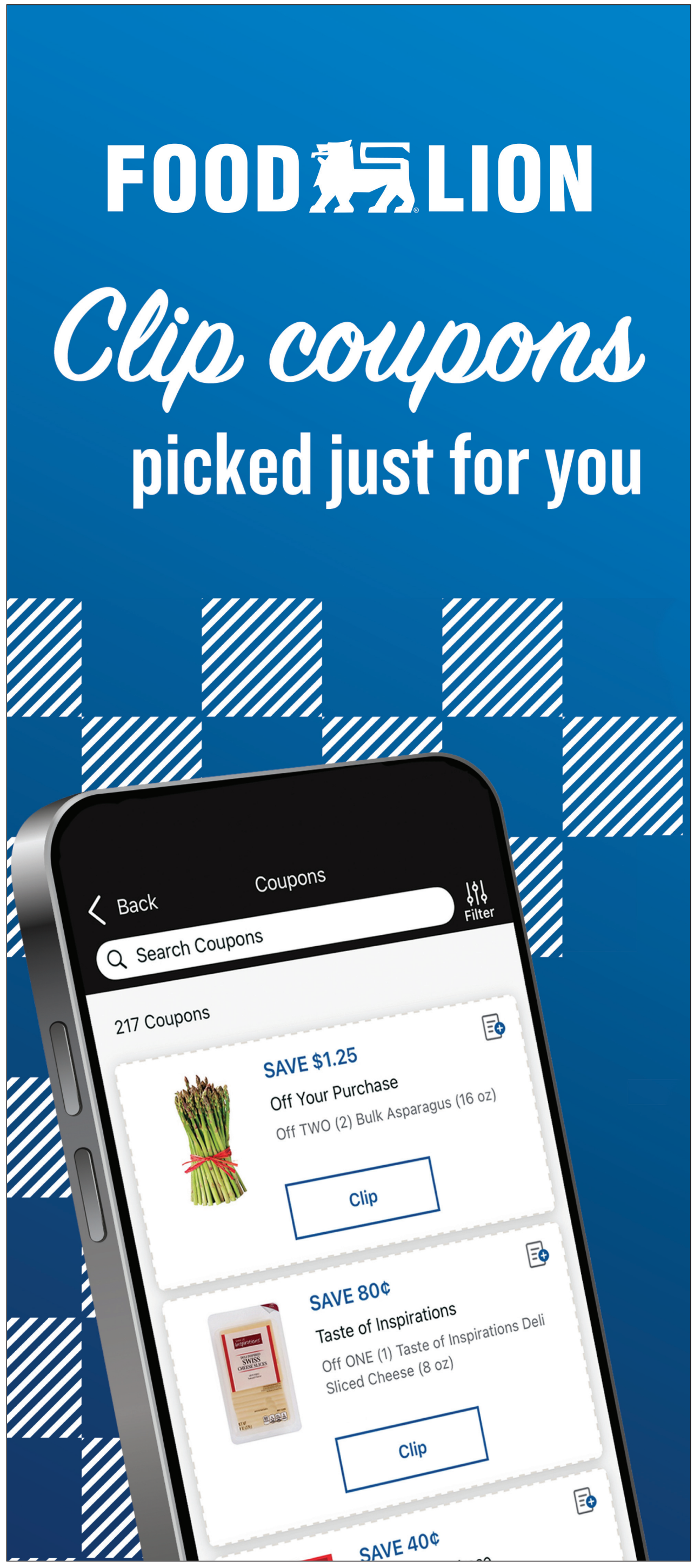
At the question-and-answer session following the screening, Hannah Preston, director of Influence NC, said organizing young people is easy.

"We had doughnuts, we had coffee, we had t-shirts," she said. "You have to have something fun to motivate folks, and not just younger people."

About 3,000 students attended its campus events, she said. Influence NC is a nonprofit that was originally sponsored by the progressive group Carolina Forward.

Democrats scored surprising victories to nearly win a supermajority in the state House, flip at least five congressional districts from Republican to Democrat with five more still too close to call, and to appear to fall just one seat short of a 25-25 tie in the state Senate.

During the Q&A, Western Carolina University political science professor Chris Cooper compared Democrats' sweeping victories to a 100-year flood, one that breached the walls meant to protect Republicans in gerrymandered districts.



The Charlotte Post

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Sports

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2026



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith linebackers Jamaris Stevens (10) and Vincent Hill celebrate Stevens' interception in the Golden Bulls' 39-33 overtime win against Virginia State Oct. 31, 2026, at McGirt Field. JCSU (8-2, 7-1 CIAA) will play Virginia Union (9-1, 8-0) in the CIAA title game Nov. 14 at Durham County Stadium.

Lessons learned, title game earned

Johnson C. Smith rides into its second straight CIAA showcase with momentum and confidence

By Herbert L. White
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Fabian Duncan transferred to Johnson C. Smith for meaningful football.

He's getting it.

The Golden Bulls, who are playing for a second straight CIAA title Saturday against Virginia Union at Durham County Stadium, are familiar with the concept. Duncan, a running back who transferred from Allen, played a major role in their return visit with 148 yards and two touchdowns on 37 carries in their 27-14 win at Livingstone in the Commemorative Classic to close the regular season 8-2.



Duncan

"I'm feeling really good," said Duncan, who extended his school single-season rushing record to 1,564 yards. "Great experience to be a part of this classic game, and really, I'm just looking forward to (the title game), being able to go compete for a championship and put a ring on my hand."

And perhaps another record in the process. Duncan's 15 touchdowns (13 rushing) equals William Dusenbury's JCSU single-season standard set in 1967, a feat Duncan was unaware of until a reporter informed him.



Flowers

"For real?" the North Mecklenburg High graduate asked. "Let me not get ahead of myself now, but OK. We got the yards, of course – cool. But we just tied the touchdown record? OK, cool. It'll be broken next Saturday."

Duncan wasn't alone in his excitement. Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers took a measure of satisfaction in finally beating Livingstone in Salisbury in his third try to improve his record against the Blue Bears to 3-2. This time, JCSU (No. 22 in the national Division II media rankings) raced to a 20-0 advantage and fended off Livingstone's rally with a combination of balanced offense and defense that rose to the occasion.

"Winning the CIAA championship is such a big high, but to come to a place where you probably had one of your biggest heartbreaks, that's really what

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Palisades aims to earn place among elite



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Palisades High players celebrate after beating Ardrey Kell 55-17 in the first round of the North Carolina 8A football playoffs. The 9-2 Pumas, ranked third in the Magnificent Seven, set a school record for wins in a season in the program's fifth campaign. They play at 10-0 Hough, the top-ranked team in the state, in the second round.

By Herbert L. White
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Palisades High is playing for more than football respect.

The Pumas, who beat Ardrey Kell 55-17 last week in the first round of the North Carolina 8A playoffs, are creating history in the program's fifth season. They set a new standard with the most wins in a campaign (nine) and are in the postseason for the third straight year. Palisades, No. 3 in the Magnificent Seven rankings, doesn't have a championship pedigree, but quarterback Cole Hough, a Liberty commit, contends the Pumas are ahead of schedule – and skeptics.

"I would love for them to keep sleeping on us, but I feel like this really shows that we're like a real we're a real power in North Carolina," he said. "If they want to keep sleeping on Palisades, we're just going to shock them again. Nobody expected us to do this right here, but we came out and handled business."

The Pumas (9-2) certainly did against fifth-ranked Ardrey Kell (7-4). Hough accounted for five touchdowns while completing 19-of-22 passes for 263 yards and four touchdowns. He also scored on a 74-yard run. Riley-Champ Hicks was Hough's

Please see **PALISADES** | 6A

No. 1 Hough vs. No. 3 Palisades in second round

By Herbert L. White
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The 8A football playoffs are underway, and so is Hough High's run to sweeping aside all contenders.

Hough High, the wire-to-wire No. 1 in The Post's Magnificent Seven rankings, makes its postseason debut in the West region bracket, where they'll take on No. 3 Palisades. No. 2 Mallard Creek, the Meck Power Six champion, takes on Pinecrest and No. 4 Chambers tangles with No. 6 West Charlotte.

This week's rankings, with overall record and previous week's ranking.

1. *Hough* (10-0, PW: No. 1). The question in 8A is simple: can anyone challenge Hough? The Huskies start their state title quest against upset-minded Palisades.

2. *Mallard Creek* (8-2, PW: No. 2). The Mavericks earned a first-round bye in the 8A tournament after knocking off Chambers in the regular season finale. Next up is 8-3 Pinecrest, which beat Providence 49-29 in the first round.

3. *Palisades* (9-2, PW: No. 3). The Pumas have been nothing short of admirable with a 55-17 romp against Ardrey Kell their latest conquest. A trip to top-ranked Hough is the ultimate challenge for a team that set a school record for most wins in a season.

4. *Chambers* (9-1, PW: No. 4). The Cougars earned a first-round bye after finishing second to Mallard Creek in the Meck Power Six race. Chambers will kick off

See **MAGNIFICENT** | 6A

Charlotte 49ers search for complimentary football success

By Cameron Williams
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Charlotte needs to find a way to put a total game together.

For the second week in a row, the 49ers (1-8, 1-4 American) lost despite plenty of chances to put the game away. This time it was against Alabama Birmingham (5-4, 3-2 American), where they gave up two fourth-quarter touchdowns in a 23-12 loss.

Charlotte led 6-3 lead midway through the third quarter, but couldn't take advantage of four takeaways in the first three quarters.

"We had our chances offensively with the turnovers that we got," 49ers coach Tim Albin said. "Really for the second week in a row to get some points on the board and get them out of their game plan offensively. We couldn't muster that up. … We went into the game being somewhat conservative on third down, as long as the score was still a ball game, which it was until the last eight minutes probably."

The problems for Charlotte were opposites from a week ago against Tulane. Last week the offense was in rhythm while the defense stumbled late. This week the offense couldn't find a groove.

"I wish I could say, 'Hey, this is what it is going to take,'" Albin said. "There is a lot that goes into [complimentary football]. Offensively, we just weren't as sharp on some things, but you have to give credit to the defense we were playing, because they dictated the game. They lined up and just played their base stuff

Please see **49ERS** | 6A

Hampered Panthers defense still in flux

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Carolina Panthers' evolving defense started slowly against Denver.

On the second play from scrimmage, a pass from Broncos quarterback Bo Nix to Troy Franklin fell incomplete, but a penalty pattern started.

Cornerback Corey Thornton, who earned his first start this season after a promotion from the practice squad, was called for pass interference, a 27-yard penalty. It was the first of 10 first-half penalties in a 26-21 loss, resulting in 101 yards and the second-most total in franchise history for a half.



Canales

"First of all, when you play a good opponent you have to minimize the mistakes, and 100 yards of penalties in the first half was a big one," coach Dave Canales said. "We're asking our corners to challenge outside, but we got to be clean with our hands. [Officials] call what they see, and a lot of those extended drives for them early on some third downs."

The Broncos benefited from the call with a field goal.

On Denver's second possession, the Panthers committed three penalties, including cornerback Marco Wilson's pass interference on third down, leading to a 10-0 first-quarter deficit.

Entering Sunday ranked No. 6 in the NFL with 57 penalties; the Panthers were flagged 13 times for 129 yards.

Making his second start for the injury-plagued Panthers, Wilson, another practice squad call-up, paired with Thornton as replacements for injured

Please see **HAMPERED** | 6A

Palisades High sets its sights on football elite

Continued from page 5A

top target with seven receptions for 127 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

"Everything's clicking on all cylinders today, but we still see more steps that we can get better at. "There was a lot of things that we didn't have go our way in the first half. We played a good, really good second half, but this just goes to like show what a team can do."

The Pumas, who play top-ranked Hough High (10-0) in the second round, have succeeded despite adversity. Jonathan Simmons, Palisades' inaugural coach, was suspended a week ahead of the season opener and ultimately resigned. Assistant coach Darrel Wilson stepped in to lead the Pumas to the Southwestern 7A/8A title, which earned Cole Hough's endorsement.

"First I want to say thank you to Coach Simmons for just giving us a standard to make sure that everything was still running the way that he built it," the quarterback said. "Wilson, he's done a heck of a job. I couldn't ask for a better head coach right now, the way he's brought together, made us like brothers. … If he wants the job, I feel like there's no way he can take it away."

Magnificent Seven: Hough's No. 1

Continued from page 5A

their West region drive at home against West Charlotte.

5. *Myers Park* (8-3, PW: No. 6). The Mustangs rolled South Mecklenburg 55-22 in the first round of the 8A tournament a week after beating the Sabres 35-0 in the regular season finale. It's off to 8-2 West Forsyth for the second round.

6. *West Charlotte* (7-4, PW: No. 7). The Lions beat Hoke County in the first round of the 8A draw, a good sign for first-year coach D.J. McFadden's crew. Next is a rematch at Chambers, which rolled West Charlotte 35-7 on Oct. 23.

7. *Ardrey Kell* (7-4, PW: No. 5). The Knights' season came to a crashing halt with a 55-17 loss at Palisades in the first round of the state playoffs, but first-year coach Carter Greene did a good job of taking Ardrey Kell to a 4-1 mark in the Southwestern 7A/8A.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Carolina Panthers safety Tre'von Moehrig (7) pressures Denver Broncos quarterback Bo Nix in the Broncos' 26-21 win Nov. 8, 2026 at Bank of America Stadium.

Hampered Panthers defense still challenged by injuries, turnover

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starters Jaycee Horn and Mike Jackson.

Wilson, who paced Carolina with eight tackles and two passes defended during his debut in the loss to Green Bay Packers on Oct. 29, is trying to make an impression to spend the remainder of the season with Carolina or another franchise.

A six-year pro, Wilson said he spent the first two months of the season "on the couch." He's trying to make up for lost time after spending training camp with the Miami Dolphins, registering four tackles (three solo) and a pass defended Sunday.

"Everything that I do in my life, it's all about consistency," Wilson said Thursday. "I'm looking to put another consistent week together and just do whatever I can. Whatever my coaches call and ask me to do on Sunday, that's exactly what I'm going to."

Competing in a game for the first time since 2024, Wilson said: "It was amazing. It was a blessing. It's something I've been trying to get back to for a long time, and I'm just super blessed and super grateful to be able to have that opportunity right in front of me.

"Every chance I get to put my helmet on and step on that grass, I'm going to take advantage of the opportunity."

DC Todd Wash assumes control

Sunday's game was the first under interim defensive coordinator Todd Wash, who replaced the fired Ejiro Evero. A former Jacksonville Jaguars defensive coordinator from 2016-20, Wash indicated he will adjust the 3-4 base defense into a more attack-oriented unit.

Despite the cornerback corps injuries – rookie Will Lee III was also sidelined Sunday – Wash said he remained confident in Wilson's abilities.

"Football is really important to him," Wash said. "You see his intentionality in meetings, on the practice field. He's a no-nonsense guy. How in the world did we end up finding him?

Following the slow start against the Broncos (7-2), who have won five straight, the Panthers (3-5) rallied to a 14-13 lead. Threatening to extend their lead, Bryce Young threw an end-zone interception off a weird bounce. The Broncos took the lead for good on their next possession.

With the slumping Panthers poised to get their top two cornerbacks soon, Wilson said he will continue to make the most of his opportunity.

"Go out there and do what I need to do and everything else takes care of itself," he said.

Jacks prep for USL One title match

By Steve Goldberg
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Charlotte Independence are one game away from the USL One championship.

After running roughshod over an in-form FC Naples in the quarterfinal, the Jacks beat Forward Madison 2-1 last week at American Legion Memorial Stadium in a semifinal.

Naples were on an eight-game unbeaten run with six straight wins before landing in Charlotte. Fourth-seeded Madison also put together a big run this season, nine games unbeaten with seven consecutive wins from mid-June to the beginning of August, advanced with a 2-1 win over Spokane Velocity FC. Their 56 goals in the regular season were second-best to the 74 netted by the Jacks, but their defense was tops in the league with 31 conceded. Charlotte gave up 47 goals.

Home advantage is real for the Jacks, who went 14-1-1 at home during the regular season.

It would be cliché to say the Jacks are scoring just for fun, as this is a team focused on results. But, to a man, they will say it's fun as well.

"The simple answer is both," said coach Mike Jeffries, "though the reality is that the team is about finding ways to win games (the fun part), and scoring goals quite obviously helps. The group enjoys playing together and working to help each other and the group succeed."

Souaibou Marou, who was awarded the Golden Boot as the league's top scorer with 18 goals, agrees.

"It's a bit of both, really. We have fun on the pitch because we genuinely enjoy playing together and sharing that collective energy, and scoring so many goals is the direct result of that great chemistry, hard work, and relentless effort from the whole squad."



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith football coach Maurice Flowers took a measure of satisfaction from the Golden Bulls' 27-14 win against Livingstone in Salisbury – his first in three trips with JCSU.

Lessons learned, and a CIAA title game earned

Continued from page 5A

growth is about," Flowers said. "It's what faith is about, and just so glad that we're able to do this together. When you have faith, it gets tested, and our faith has been tested.

"Just look at the road that we have traveled because leaving this field in '24, when we got beat 15-10, and we had everything in our grasp – win and go to the championship game, win and go to the playoffs – and we came up short. You know what? That's really life, also, so to learn those lessons and … come back to the scene where it happened is major."

For the second straight season, JCSU closed with a win streak after losing a conference game to reach the CIAA final. This time, it required beating Virginia State (7-3, 6-2) to grab second in the conference standings and rival Livingstone to close the deal.

"We're still growing as a program," Flowers said. "We've got to remember this is still new to us and a few weeks ago at Bowie State, it was new to us, bringing your 'A' game every single game. "We're still growing with it, but it's just a blessing to … finish 7-1 in the conference, and to have earned our way."

And off to Durham they go for another big game in a season full of them – this time against a familiar nemesis in Virginia Union (9-1, 8-0), which is on a nine-game win streak and ranked 18th in the nation.

"Definitely feeling really good, but at the same time still not done yet," Duncan said. "I've been saying it since game one, game two, the job's still the same, but I'm definitely feeling really good about this."

49ers seek complimentary wins

Continued from page 5A

because we couldn't get to them. We didn't put any pressure on them."

Charlotte had a chance to get within a score with just over four minutes to go. Conner Harrell found a wide-open Jaden Barnes, who dropped the pass that effectively ended the 49ers' comeback aspirations as the Blazers proceeded to score and put the game out of reach.

"[Barnes] is a competitor," Albin said. "He's made plays all year for us. He is a competitor and he cheers the defense on. He is a great teammate. I like where he is at. I played [the] position. You can't catch them all. You want to."

Charlotte has three games left, with two at home, starting next week against in-state rival East Carolina at Richardson Stadium.

"I just challenged our guys," Albin said. "We are at home two out of the last three weeks and we've got a lot to play for. We have to protect how we play and how we prepare. That is the big challenge moving forward. They can't take coaching personally, but we are going to correct the mistakes and look forward to playing in front of Niner Nation against ECU, an in-state rival."

Tanner takes over Shaw women's hoops

By Bonitta Best
THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

Shaw women's basketball coach Ebony Tanner is feeling right at home.

Her father, sister, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends have walked across Shaw's stage at some point. On her office wall is a photo of her being held by her dad, Shaw Hall of Famer Bonnie Tanner.

On the court, she helped the Bears win a CIAA tournament championship as an assistant under former head coach Jacques Curtis. Now, it's her turn.

"Our motto is 'Legacy Starts Now,'" said Tanner, the program's first woman head coach. "We honor the past. We own the present, and we're building the future, and that's what we're focused on right now. Building our future and establishing our own legacy."

Tanner led Elizabeth City State women's program for two seasons, compiling a 13-38 record. Prior to the Vikings, she was St. Augustine's head coach for five seasons. In 2023-24, the Falcons recorded their first winning season in 13 years. St. Aug's eliminated its athletic programs after that.

Tanner takes over a Shaw program that once owned the CIAA tourney, winning nine titles from 2003-14. The Bears haven't produced a winning season since 2022-23, including last season's 8-16 (5-11 CIAA) finish.

Tanner inherited "seven new daughters" and recruited nine newbies. Gone is leading scorer D'Ayzha Atkinson and her 15.5 points and 6.6 rebounds per game.

Returning senior guard/forward Ashara Spruill wasn't the highest scorer on the team, but she gave the Bears an all-around effort every game.

"I like to get all my teammates involved. I like to facilitate and move the ball and keep the offense going," she said.

Bazemore earns full-time status

Coach Wykevin Bazemore had the interim tag dropped after leading the Bears to a respectable 16-10 (7-9 CIAA) record last season.

Shaw never advanced to the tournament semifinals under five-year coach Bobby Collins. Bazemore believes he has the remedy to change that.

"We're going to defend. We're going to guard, going to be tough, be scrappy; the kind of style that I played, I'm trying to instill that into the guys," he said.

Bazemore, who also coached Shaw's junior varsity for three seasons, had some style as a standout guard at Winston-Salem State. The National Black College Freshman of the Year and four-time All-CIAA selection led the Rams to the 2011-12 tournament championship in three title game appearances and finished his collegiate career with 1,337 points and 984 rebounds.

"He's done a good job setting a standard for us in the gym and out of the gym, making sure our head is on right," guard/forward Alijah England said. "So his example is less talking and more showing…everything about us he is trying to instill in us and make sure that we all play with that same fire."

Shaw lost starters Dreveon Scott and Avery Huggins to graduation, and Isaiah Buckley to North Carolina Central. As a returning senior, England has nicknamed himself "Swiss Army Knife."

I give a little bit of everything to the team that we need," he said. "This year we brought in a lot more people. The chemistry is good in the locker room. A lot of us can feed off each other."

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