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## Anger over immigrant raids



HERBERT L. WHITE | THE CHARLOTTE POST

North Carolina Sen. Caleb Theodros, who moved to the United States from Eritrea in east Africa as a child, criticized deployment of federal agents to conduct immigration enforcement raids in Charlotte. More than 100 people have been taken into custody by Customs and Border Protection since agents arrived on Nov. 15.

### Federal intervention ignites community pushback

By Herbert L. White

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Closed shops.

Armed agents snatching people off the street.

A city unsure about what comes next.

That's the first week of Operation Charlotte's Web.

The federal crackdown on immigration enforcement has shaken Charlotte, with more than 130 people taken into custody by Customs and Border Protection agents. In response, protesters took to the streets and even East Mecklenburg High School, where students organized a walkout on Tuesday.

Although most of the attention on immigrant communities has focused on Hispanics, Black Charlotteans are lending support while criticizing the Trump administration's deployment of CBP to Charlotte - which is 1,618 miles from the Mexico border.

"It was immigrants who built this country," Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP President Corine Mack said last week. "Africans who were enslaved, who had no opportunity for freedom or even freedom of thought, were, in fact, immigrants. Now we're talking about immigration as if it's something over there or over there, but the harm to

every immigrant is harm to every one of us. In this country, we want to believe that the Constitution has protected us all, and in fact, it has not. That doesn't mean that we can't work to ensure that it does."

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police reiterated last week in a statement that "does not have the authority to enforce federal immigration laws. Our responsibility is to enforce federal and state criminal laws and local ordinances. Immigration enforcement falls under the jurisdiction of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and CBP, both of which operate

Please see IMMIGRANT | 2A

everyday

testimony reviewed by attorneys and volunteer networks. Organizers said most initial reports don't meet that standard and are left out.

The information is not updated in real

time. It can take several days to verify

whether an incident involved federal

agents or whether it was just local law

enforcement activity.

"This is a tool designed to provide a

point of reference for how those pat-

terns are actually taking place in our

state," Gonzalez said, "to allow people to

Please see NC ADVOCATES | 3A

### Would crime spike justify National Guard?

By Lucas Thomae

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Is crime getting worse in Charlotte?

It's a simple question that's trickier to answer than one might think.

On the whole, no, crime rates in North Carolina's largest city are down compared to last year. But homicides in Uptown, the central business district that includes banking headquarters, sports arenas, night clubs and transit hubs, is at its highest point since at least 2015.

The city has faced extreme scrutiny in the months since Iryna Zarutskaya's murder on Charlotte's light rail transit system in August, which has since escalated into calls for deployment of the National Guard to assist with policing.

Zarutskaya, a 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee, became a rallying point for Republicans concerned about crime in America's cities, President Donald Trump among them, whose administration is fighting multiple legal battles over his deployment of National Guard troops to Portland and Chicago to support immigration crackdowns in those cities.

National Guardsmen were also activated in Memphis and Washington, D.C., earlier this year specifically to address crime.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein has dismissed the calls to activate the National Guard in Charlotte, which is, at least for now, enough to keep them out of the city.

"Local, well-trained law enforcement officers who live in and know their communities are best equipped to keep North Carolina neighborhoods safe, not military servicemembers," Stein's office said in a statement circulated to reporters.

Some pockets of Charlotte were also shaken this weekend by the U.S. Border Patrol, who made arrests across the city in an operation which the federal government said was targeted at undocumented migrants with criminal histories.

Immigration sweeps preceded

Please see WOULD | 2A

### NC advocates create state map of ICE activity

By Ahmed Jallow

NC NEWSLINE

Siembra NC, a North Carolina immigrant rights group, has launched a digital map showing where federal immigration officials have been sighted across the state.

The goal is to help immigrants make informed decisions about their routes to school and work.

The website, called Ojo Obrero ("Look out, workers"), compiles sightings of immigration enforcement activity into a single, statewide map. Organizers say

the tool is meant to counter misinformation and give communities a better sense of where enforcement activity has taken place as federal operations continue to disrupt daily life.

"We want this to be a resource for people to get a clear picture and make decisions accordingly," Emanuel Gomez Gonzalez, Siembra NC communications strategist, told reporters during a virtual press conference.

The map includes only verified sightings of federal immigration operations. Each report must be backed by video or

testimony reviewed by attorneys and volunteer networks. Organizers said most initial reports don't meet that standard and are left out.

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terns are actually taking place in our

state," Gonzalez said, "to allow people to

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### JCSU alum Maurice Flowers the leader football, campus needed

Legacy.

Ruminate on that word.

One may think legacy is something you have or how you're remembered. While these are partially true, what legacy truly means at its root is the lasting impact you will have on someone or something.

Johnson C. Smith University football coach Maurice Flowers has begun to leave his on his alma mater in a way only he can. The Golden Bulls secured their first CIAA football title since 1969 with a dominant 45-21 win over Virginia Union, winner of the previous two championships.

As a JCSU alumnus and three-time All-American quarterback, this was beyond special. It was rewarding and gratifying.

"When that clock hit zero, it really made me think about the years that I played at JCSU," Flowers said. "We struggled. To look

Please see JCSU | 2A



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith University football coach Maurice Flowers led the Golden Bulls from perennial loser to CIAA champion in four seasons. The Golden Bulls, who beat Virginia Union in the CIAA title game on Nov. 15, are 10-1, the best single season in school history.

### Initiative takes on holiday scams

By Nikya Hightower

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Tis the season for holiday scams.

JPMorgan Chase is hosting workshops in partnership with law enforcement and local partners in recognition of International Fraud Awareness Week. The financial services giant is combating the issue by providing tools to help individuals and families avoid being a victim of spam or fraud and understand how to protect themselves in these situations.

Please see INITIATIVE | 3A

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## Immigrant raids spark anger and uncertainty

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ate under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)."

CMPD officials confirm the agency isn't authorized to execute federal administrative warrants, which are civil documents, nor plan or conduct immigration enforcement activities. Officers can become involved only in the event of criminal behavior or a warrant that falls under CMPD jurisdiction.

CBP, which deployed to Charlotte on Nov. 15, immediately swept into immigrant neighborhoods in the east and south. The deployment of federal assets, which was called for by three Republican lawmakers and the Fraternal Order of Police Charlotte-Mecklenburg chapter as a response to lawlessness. Democrats contend Charlotte's political profile - moderate-to-progressive with Black people in prominent elected and appointed positions - made it a target.

"Deploying armed, masked federal agents into our neighborhoods is not the way to build safer streets - it's a recipe for fear, confusion, and division," said City Council member Malcolm Graham. "There is no evidence that Charlotte faces an immigration crisis or that such extreme measures are necessary. If these reports are accurate, this appears to be more about politics than public safety."

State Sen. Caleb Theodros, whose family immigrated from East Africa, said the lack of communication from Washington adds to the anxiety.

"The past week has shown us what a way to govern where we have had community members, elected officials, even reporters, on these fact-finding missions just to find out

whether a federal force is coming into the city of Charlotte, the number one word you're all going to hear in the next few months when time to campaign is going to be transparency," he said. "What part of this governing has been transparent? Part of this entire process has been fully shown, so that community members know what's going on, and I understand what these community members are going through."

The federal presence in North Carolina is expected to expand. Raleigh officials have confirmed immigration enforcement agents are likely to deploy there this week.

"We've witnessed what these tactics look like elsewhere, and every North Carolinian should be horrified," said state Sen. Sydney Batch, a Democrat and the chamber's minority leader. "The federal government's unconstitutional actions are not only an insult to our Constitution, they are an affront to our values. North Carolina has always stood against federal overreach and fought for civil rights. We will not allow our communities to be used as battlegrounds by a federal administration hellbent on cruelty."

Said Graham: "Heavy-handed enforcement tactics will only disrupt families, harm local businesses, and erode the community trust we've worked so hard to build. We must be clear: Charlotte doesn't need or want federal agents conducting warrantless operations in our city."

## JCSU alumnus Maurice Flowers delivers on and off football field

Continued from page 1A

up in the stands and see some of the guys I played with, we would go to practice and then get our brains beat in sometimes. To go through so many things and start coaching and to do this at my alma mater, it's a different kind of special."

Flowers did not come back to his alma mater to make it respectable. He came back to build a consistent winner. Over the last three seasons, he's seen the fruits of that labor, going 7-3 in 2023, 8-2 in 2024, and 10-1 in 2025 with a Division II playoff berth, the school's first.

"When I came back here, it was never to come back and be respectable," Flowers said. "It was always to come back and be a winner and compete for CIAA championships. That's what it was from the beginning. It was to compete for CIAA championships and also make the playoffs and go compete for a national championship. So, we were on the way to doing those things."

Flowers is a proud Charlottean and he will tell anyone that. To coach at his alma mater down the street where he grew up, the pride knowing he brought a championship back to his city makes Flowers emotional.

"When I first moved to Charlotte, we lived off Sycamore Street, right down from the Bojangles, from Johnson C Smith," he said. "I used to play at Frazier Park, and I used to play up on Johnson C. Smith's campus and never thought I would end up going to JCSU. So, then to know the history of JCSU, they always had good football players there but never put it all together. To come back and have the support of so many that we have is special. . . ."

Flowers thanks the university's leadership, making sure to mention that President Valerie Kinloch found a way to miss the victory bath at the end.

"She should have got doused with some water, much as she's down there on the sidelines," Flowers said, "but she's so supportive of us. And I'm just so happy for our university."

Flowers started his coaching career in the high school ranks with various stops as an assistant, including Duncanville (Texas), one of the most storied programs in the country. Flowers is implementing a lot of what he learned in those early days on the Golden Bulls.

"At Duncanville, it showed me structure," Flowers said. "It showed how to structure your team and how to have a good plan year-round for your program. Having a vision and sticking to it. That's a winning program, so to be able to spend some time there, and really, a lot of the things that we do comes from that time. My time as a high school assistant, then to be chosen as a high school head coach,

then to move on to be an assistant in college, and then to be a college head coach, a lot of what I do is not very different [from Duncanville]."

Kinloch said it is great to have football success, but what is even better is seeing your coach being a leader on the field and off.

"When I look at coach Flowers and his development and growth over all of these years," Kinloch said, "... it means that he will always put students first. It means that he cares about these players just as much as he cares about anything else. He invests time in them; he invests energy. And the result is we're the 2025 champions."

Kinloch added one of Flowers' best qualities is his selfless nature, which positions him to lead going forward.

"Coach Flowers is the leader of this program, and I put a period after that," she said. "He isn't just the leader of the football team but a leader on our campus both with football and beyond. ... Beyond winning, he sees human beings. He wants to help these young men develop and as a president, I can't ask for anything more than that. He does everything asked of him and does so going above and beyond. For that, I am grateful."

Flowers' investment in his players can't be shown better than with quarterback Kelvin Durham. Flowers recruited Durham when he was coach at Fort Valley State and that relationship grew stronger this season as Durham led the Golden Bulls to a single season record for wins.

"He took a chance on me coming out of high school," Durham said. "I had some injuries in my senior year of high school, and he took a chance on me. He actually taught me the game of a quarterback. He taught me how to read a defense properly, learn how to play fast and be a better quarterback. This year being my senior year, I knew this was the place for me."

Flowers is not one to take personal credit for much of anything, and when asked what made this team a Maurice Flowers-coached team, he was quick to divert credit to his players for transforming the program to a player-led team. He also credited his staff for showing what leadership is supposed to look like.

Legacy. Think about that word. Maurice Flowers is leaving one on his alma mater.

Cameron Williams is a reporter at The Post.



Kinloch



Durham

## Would crime spike justify call for the National Guard?

Continued from page 1A

the National Guard deployments to Los Angeles, Chicago and Portland.

### Some seek National Guard deployment

It's worth looking at how Charlotte got to this point, but sorting out the politics from the reality on the ground is difficult.

The firestorm surrounding Zarutska's murder, compounded with an increase in homicides in Uptown (10 in 2025, compared to four last year), has created a narrative that the city is experiencing a "growing violence crisis," as described in a Nov. 5 letter penned by Republican Reps. Mark Harris, Pat Harrigan and Chuck Edwards, requesting that Stein dispatch the National Guard to assist CMPD with policing.

Harrigan's and Edwards' districts do not include any of Charlotte, while Harris' mostly rural district includes small portions of east Charlotte.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Fraternal Order of Police, a union that represents 1,690 CMPD officers, made the same request a month earlier in a letter addressed to Stein, Trump and Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles, a Democrat.

FOP President Daniel Redford attributed the uptick of violent crimes in Uptown to a "severe staffing crisis" within the department.

FOP has pressured the Charlotte City Council for years to increase pay and fund additional CMPD officer positions. According to Redford, the department has about 1,800 of 1,936 sworn officer positions filled, or about a 7% vacancy rate.

In an interview with Carolina Public Press, he defended FOP's request for the National Guard from criticism that it was purely a political maneuver.

"If keeping our officers safe by having an adequate number of police officers and support personnel out there, I mean, if that's a political issue, then I think people need to revisit their view of politics," he said.

"Because keeping our citizens safe and keeping police officers safe should not be a partisan issue."

Prosecutors in Charlotte are also stretched thin, District Attorney Spencer Merriweather told CPP. The state legislature's crime bill passed in the wake of Zarutska's death funded 10 additional assistant district attorney positions for Mecklenburg County, but that still only brings the number of full-time prosecutors to half of what Merriweather thinks should be sufficient for a county of Mecklenburg's size.

Too few prosecutors means that court calendars become backlogged and older criminal cases fall apart, allowing perpetrators to fall between the cracks.

"The issues that we face within our court system are problems of scale," Merriweather said.

"Our job is to make sure that we're not falling behind and that we're meeting the public safety needs of our community, and as grateful as we are for the help that we've gotten, we've still got a long way to go."

### Addressing crime in Uptown

Overall, crime is down in the city compared to last year, murders included, which CMPD celebrated in its most recent quarterly crime statistics report. But the data since 2020 shows a less positive picture, never consistently decreasing and instead remaining somewhere in the ballpark of 100 annually. To date, there's been 83 homicides reported this year.

Most recently, CMPD announced it was investigating the death of 31-year-old Tararus Tajuan Henry, who was shot and killed in Uptown Charlotte shortly after 11 p.m. on Friday.

The department has signaled that it is listening to the public's concerns about crime, specifically in Uptown.

In October, the agency announced two new initiatives focused on policing in Charlotte's city center. The first was the re-establishment of the department's defunct Entertainment District Unit, which is tasked with policing the areas around bars and nightclubs from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m.

The other is what the department calls the CROWN Culture Initiative (an acronym for Center City's Restoration of Order, Wellness and Nonviolence), which empowers officers to make arrests for what CMPD Captain Christian Wagner calls "quality of life" crimes: public urination, open alcohol containers and disorderly conduct.

national issues played into his vote; he was concerned about affordable housing on the local level, but also about Donald Trump's immigration agenda on the national level. Greensboro couple Morgan and Christopher Drazek said they voted for liberal candidates to balance out the nation's broader political conservatism.

But in a political world with very little left to nationalize, some votes remained solely about local issues and local candidates.

In some ways, North Carolinians followed the national Democratic tide. Durham voter Chris Williams said both local and

As the top officer in CMPD's Central Division, Wagner has overseen the implementation of these initiatives in Uptown Charlotte. So far, he said, they've been met with positive reception from the public.

The CROWN Culture Initiative strictly applies to a half-mile radius around Independence Square in the heart of the city, where Wagner said incidents involving police and resident complaints were most common.

"Whatever the numbers say, the feeling that people have, their perception of crime, is really, really important," Wagner said.

"What we wanted to do is enhance the perception of safety and quality of life in Uptown by strictly enforcing statutes and ordinances that directly contribute to that sense of unlawful disorder."

He added that officers are trained to connect individuals experiencing homelessness or mental health crises - those who might be disproportionately arrested for such offenses under this initiative - with the appropriate resources.

Border Patrol operation muddies the picture

An extra layer of complexity is the commencement of U.S. Border Patrol operations in the city this past weekend.

Gregory Bovino, a senior official in the Border Patrol who led previous large-scale immigration enforcement operations in Los Angeles and Chicago this year, said on the social media platform X that his team arrested 81 undocumented immigrants in Charlotte on Saturday, many of whom had criminal histories.

Because of the lack of transparency by the federal government about its immigration operations, the supposed criminal histories of those arrested is difficult to verify.

Merriweather told CPP that while he doesn't have comprehensive numbers, his prosecutor's office does handle a "significant number" of criminal cases involving undocumented migrants, sometimes as perpetrators and sometimes as victims.

"What we try to look at is really just about the crime that's been committed and what the impact on public safety is and meet that where it is," he said.

Border Patrol is a separate agency from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly abbreviated as ICE, although both are federal-level agencies within the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE has operated in Charlotte and elsewhere across the state long before this weekend, but Border Patrol's presence so far away from a national border is unusual. Neither CMPD nor the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office were a part of the planning or operations with Border Patrol, those agencies said.

Protests against federal immigration enforcement operations in several major cities across the country were the impetus for the federalization of the National Guard in those cities earlier this year.

City and state leaders in those places have sued the Trump Administration over those deployments, arguing that they were illegal, and federal judges so far have ruled in the local leaders' favor. But the president has since appealed up to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has yet to weigh in on the matter.

UNC School of Law Professor Rick Su, who specializes in immigration law, told CPP that what happens in Charlotte could ultimately rely on how the Supreme Court rules.

"If violent protest ramps up in Charlotte, the administration will likely point to that in justifying deployment," he said.

"But I suspect it wouldn't be really that big of a deal what happens in Charlotte as the major question on authority is what the Supreme Court will say."

In a video message Sunday, Stein said he had been in regular contact with local law enforcement as Border Patrol operated in the city.

"Public safety is our top priority, and our well-trained local officers know their communities and are here for the long haul," he said.

He commanded Charlotteans for remaining peaceful while accusing the federal government of "stoking fear" rather than fixing a "broken" immigration system.

"Rather than fix it, the federal government continues to play politics with it," he added.

## Did NC elections signal a blue wave?

By Sarah Michel

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

It wasn't so much a blue wave as it was a blue mist permeating North Carolina's municipal elections.

On Nov. 4, while Democrats rode a tsunami of anti-establishment discontent to victory nationally, from New Jersey and Virginia governorships to California's redistricting proposition, North Carolina held its own, smaller elections in hundreds of municipalities.

In some ways, North Carolinians followed the national Democratic tide.

Durham voter Chris Williams said both local and

their choices would influence local growth and development, not what Congress or the President were up to.

Registered Democrats flipped about 133 seats from Republican to Democratic across the state on Nov. 4, according to North Carolina Democratic Party Chair Anderson Clayton.

But there's a catch: the overwhelming majority of North Carolina's municipal races are nonpartisan. In name, at least. It doesn't take much effort to find out who the Democrats and Republicans are in nonpartisan municipal races.

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## NC advocates create map of ICE activity

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continue to go about their day to day lives, even as we anticipate rumors and sightings of federal immigration agents to increase."

The platform allows users to filter incidents by type, such as traffic stops, and by time of day, helping parents and workers plan travel routes, especially during early-morning hours when enforcement actions are more common.

The website offers several tools beyond the map, including a digital "red card" with know-your-rights guidance, a chatbot trained on ACLU materials, and translation features for interacting with law enforcement.

It also provides county-level data on traffic-related arrests that have led to ICE detention. Siembra NC said risks are higher in Gaston, Union, and Montgomery counties, as well as in counties that recently signed 287(g) agreements, which allow local law en-

forcement to work more closely with immigration authorities.

The group cautioned that the map is not comprehensive and often shows only where federal agents were present, not whether arrests occurred.

Recent incidents cited by the organization include traffic stops in Sampson County, where Newton Grove police pulled over at least eight workers last week, and an October arrest in the Catawba County town of Brookford, where a man stopped for driving without a license was later handed over to ICE under a new local-federal agreement.

"Everyone deserves to get to work, school and back home safely," Siembra NC co-director Nikki Marin Baena said in the release. She added that many immigrant workers are legally barred from obtaining driver's licenses, calling arrests that lead to ICE detention "cruelty" that harms the state's economy.



CLAYTON HENKEL | NC NEWSLINE

Demonstrators gather in Raleigh on Nov. 16 to speak out against the crackdown on undocumented immigrants by Border Patrol agents in Charlotte.

## Dozens of immigrants and allies protest in Raleigh

By Clayton Henkel

NC NEWSLINE

Immigrants and their allies gathered in downtown Raleigh Sunday afternoon to protest the federal Border Patrol's deployment to Charlotte.

Protestors said it was important to mobilize rapidly and demand that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement leave the state while also standing in defense of immigrant families facing escalating threats.

Ariana Perez said she was marching in Raleigh because she was worried about what might happen to her own parents if a similar crackdown were to occur in the Triangle. She was troubled by social media posts claiming to show Border Patrol tactics in Charlotte.

"I don't think it's justified," Perez said. "They are pushing them out of the cars [to the ground] rather than just talking to them."

Video shared with WBTV show border agents smashing the driver's side window of one motorist's vehicle while allegedly searching for undocumented immigrants. The motorist, who was not arrested and says he is a U.S. citizen, said the federal agents were looking for Latino people, not criminals.

In a statement Saturday, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Tricia McLaughlin said, "We are surging DHS law enforcement to Charlotte to ensure Amer-

icans are safe and public safety threats are removed. There have been too many victims of criminal illegal aliens."

The DHS statement listed several detainees the agency claims have criminal records that make them a threat to the Charlotte community. The agency said it made 81 arrests in Charlotte Saturday. No numbers for Sunday were available at the time of publication.

On Saturday, Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles, Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners Chair Mark Jerrell and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education Chair Stephanie Sneed issued a joint statement urging people wishing to demonstrate to do so without resorting to the violence witnessed in other cities.

"Our region has thrived and grown because our strength lies in our diversity and our collective commitment to each other and to this community," they said in the statement. "Let us all — no matter our political allegiance — stand together for all hard working and law-abiding families."

While Sunday's gathering in Raleigh was peaceful, Coco Ferguson, who said she worries for immigrant friends and family, said she hopes that many more North Carolinians will pay attention and raise their voice in the coming weeks.

"It takes every American citizen to fight ICE and to stop them from what they're doing," Ferguson said.



DAVID HAUGHTON

New York farmer David Haughton is seeking donations after a fire destroyed his home in August 2025. The disaster came on the heels of federal funding cuts that eliminated many of Haughton's customers and threatened his farm's survival.

## Facing fire and US funding cuts, farmer fights to save his land

By Megan Sayles

THE AFRO-AMERICAN

New York farmer David Haughton had hoped the end of the COVID-19 pandemic would bring relief from his revenue challenges.

But just as he began to recover, new funding gaps under the 47th president's administration brought hardship back to his farm. In March, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it would cancel the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, which had helped farmers like Haughton sell produce while supplying fresh food to communities in need.

Haughton's major customers, like The Campaign Against Hunger and Grow-NYC, were directly affected.

"Because of the cut, we actually lost 60% of our market," said Haughton. "Some of them dropped out. Some of them we will have to wait a period of time to get money [from]. Some of them still owe me money."

The LFPA program was established in 2021 under the leadership of former President Joe Biden to assist farmers in addressing pandemic-related challenges. It provided funding to states to purchase produce from local farmers and then distribute it to food banks and other hunger-relief organizations. The program especially sought to support small and minority farmers, who often face greater obstacles than their counterparts.

When LFPA was terminated earlier this year, local organizations no longer had the funding to pay for Haughton's produce, putting a serious strain on his cash flow. Suddenly, the 35-acre property he had cultivated

since 1995—following the death of his son—was at risk.

"We almost lost our home and our property because we couldn't make the mortgage payments," said Haughton.

Because he is a small, Black farmer, securing a loan to help with his financial challenges proved difficult. It was the Black Farmer Fund that provided Haughton a lifeline. The organization was created by farmer activists in 2017 to provide low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance to Black farmers and other food businesses.

Myra Marcellin, investment director at BFF, said that access to capital and resources remains the top obstacle to the sustainability of Black farmers' operations—especially in light of funding changes under the Trump administration.

"Some of the grants that have been canceled and paused have really impacted Black farmers the most," said Marcellin.

For many farmers, like Haughton, that means the difference between keeping their land and losing it. Marcellin said BFF uses its \$20 million integrated capital fund to help Black farmers scale their operations and economic and social impact.

"With folks, like farmer Dave, they need support relative to marketing, branding, as well as finan-

cial and production support because they have to grow based on demand," said Marcellin. "As far as the Black Farmers Fund, we provide those levels of technical assistance to help them identify some of these challenges and areas of need so that they can understand their business better and figure out what they need to focus on to optimize their growth potential."

BFF ultimately provided Haughton with a grant that helped him save both his farm and home. He was also able to buy new equipment and hire a few part-time workers.

However, in August, a fire ravaged his home—destroying part of the house, ruining personal belongings and supplies, and flooding the basement. Haughton set up a GoFundMe page to help with his recovery.

Despite the struggles he's encountered, Haughton remains committed to being a farmer. It's been in his blood since growing up on a 14-acre farm in Jamaica.

"Farmers are heroes, and farmers feed heroes," Haughton said. "We face the most challenging times, whether it's climate change or the market falling. I wish that the federal government or even some of these financial institutions wouldn't just look at us but help us."

## Former president reaches out to ailing Jesse Jackson in Chicago

By April Ryan

BLACK PRESS USA

Several sources have confirmed that former President Barack Obama phoned the Rev. Jesse Jackson over the weekend, who is in stable condition at a Chicago hospital.

Obama is said to have been coordinating with the family for several days before the 44th president reached the civil rights icon.

There have been family connections spanning decades between the Jackson family and the Obamas. In 2008, Jesse Jackson Jr. served as the national co-chair of the Obama presidential campaign.

On Sunday, Jesse Jackson Sr. also received a FaceT-

ime call from Rev. Amos Brown, another civil rights pioneer who worked with Jackson. In the 1950s and 1960s, they marched and labored alongside Martin Luther King Jr. in the fight for first-class citizenship for African Americans. In the 1970s, the two King lieutenants separated and served in different parts of the country.

Brown told Black Press USA that Jackson recognized him during the FaceTime communication "by his expression and countenance." The San Francisco pastor of former Vice President Kamala Harris also said the elder Jackson did not speak, but Brown "encouraged him to fight on as we had fought in the struggle as friends and freedom fighters."

In a matter of days, politicians, former staffers, and others have also gone

to Jackson's bedside to encourage him during his illness, including the Rev. Al Sharpton.

In a recent written statement, the Jackson family said that Rev. Jackson was diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome in 2013. In April, the diagnosis changed to supranuclear palsy, a neurological disorder.

"We believe in the power of prayer, and we are grateful for the overwhelming outreach and prayers of the faithful," said son and family spokesperson Yusef Jackson.

"Our father is alert and continues to share his vision for churches and pastors to come together and reduce malnutrition during this period. He is enlisting 2,000 churches and pastors to distribute 2,000 baskets of food, to feed 4 million families this season."

## Initiative takes on holiday scams

Continued from page 1A

"The trends would include individuals who have been compromised, meaning their accounts or their identity has been compromised," said Shakeira Tennort, Chase's community manager in Charlotte.

With the holidays coming up, scammers are aware that spending and online shopping will increase, leaving consumers more at risk. Tennort shares some tactics used to be aware of "sense of urgency or the language that cyber criminals are using to do or act now is a way that those are red flags. Also, if a scammer is impersonating someone, that's another red flag. If they're pretending to be someone you know or someone you're comfortable with asking for money, if they're telling you to give them your confidential information, your account information, or if they're asking you to send money somewhere."

Chase is taking on the largest financial fraud and scam prevention effort in its history, which includes scam warnings, trusted contact person for customers, sharing insights with law enforcement, scam interruption team, elder assistance and training employees to support cus-

tomers through scam attacks.

To avoid scam attempts, "Don't click on any links that's going to take you to a site that could have malware or a site designed to steal your information," Tennort said. "Don't be afraid to say something. Ask a trusted advisor because scammers play on people's emotions and they try to keep people silent."

A common misconception is that scammers mainly attack certain age groups, especially the elderly.

"I would say everyone is a target. Everyone needs education and awareness of how to protect themselves," Tennort said. "The ages are 5 to senior, so that encompasses everyone."

Chase is offering workshops where the public can learn more about this issue along with other courses such as financial education that are offered year-round and on its website.

Tennort hopes consumers can learn "to take their time, slow down. If it's not expected, question it, look for those red flags, look for the language that's encouraging them or making them act now or trying to make them act now. And then also just knowing that they have resources in the community."



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# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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## Time to bring the ballot home

Americans aren't just anxious about next year's elections—they're uneasy in a deeper way.

In 2025, voters across the political spectrum worry that our country is one overheated news cycle away from political violence.

At the same time, election officials are sounding alarms about something quieter but just as dangerous: there simply aren't enough poll workers available to run our elections safely.

After years of threats, harassment, and burnout, thousands have walked away.

The people who keep democracy functioning are exhausted, and the voters they serve are fearful.

On the eve of our nation's 250th birthday, we are heading toward an election cycle with a system that feels overstretched and overstressed.

Moments like this should force us to remember what earlier generations did when democracy came under strain. In the fall of 1918, as the Spanish flu tore through Chicago, hospitals overflowed and neighborhoods fell under quarantine. Yet the city refused to let democracy collapse.

Officials rushed paper ballots to residents' homes.

Nurses carried ballots to the sick; clerks delivered them to families behind closed doors. It was improvised and imperfect—but it worked.

Chicago proved something we need to remember now: when the ballot comes to the voter, democracy survives.

As America approaches its 250th year, we face a similar choice. Will we cling to systems that assume voters and poll workers will always be able to show up in person on the same day?

Or will we meet voters where they actually live—with a system designed for the pressures and possibilities of modern life?

For most of our history, we have expanded the right to vote only to surround that right with new hurdles.

We ended property requirements, ended slavery, enfranchised women, and passed the Voting Rights Act—yet we never made voting simple.

Access grew, but the process remained fragile. Today, with election workers burning out and public confidence eroding, the fragility is showing. Yet this difficult moment offers something unexpected: clarity. Both political parties now see what they once resisted—that high turnout can help them.

Donald Trump proved that energizing unlikely voters can reshape the map.

Democrats have long understood that expanding access brings in voters who otherwise sit out. Now Republicans know it, too. Participation is no longer a partisan advantage.

It is a shared national opportunity.

That recognition makes this the hour for community leaders to rise together—so that when the 2026 legislative season arrives, our lawmakers are ready to shape elections that are simple, secure, and worthy of the nation's 250th year.

A vote-at-home system is the clearest path to get there. A mailed-out ballot gives every voter the same chance to participate, whether they work a double shift, care for elders or children, lack transportation, or simply want the quiet time to study candidates without someone sighing behind them in line.

And these systems are secure. Every ballot carries a unique barcode voters can track like a package. Signatures are verified against those on file. Bipartisan teams handle ballots at every step.

States like Colorado, Utah, and Oregon have shown that mailed ballots increase participation, build trust, and make elections easier to run and harder to disrupt.

Pennsylvania and Virginia now sit at the heart of whether the nation follows this path.

Pennsylvania's no-excuse mail voting, adopted in 2019, remains uneven after years of lawsuits and conflicting rulings. Standardizing procedures so every voter receives the same information and the same opportunity to correct mistakes would stabilize a system that often determines national outcomes.

Virginia — already further along than any southern state — needs only the confidence to finish the transition. Mailing ballots to all active voters, with a simple opt-out and a clear statewide education effort, would give the Commonwealth a model of civic strength heading into 2026.

The 250th anniversary of the United States should not be a moment simply to celebrate our democratic inheritance. It should be the moment we improve it.

If we want a democracy strong enough for the next 250 years, we must bring the ballot home—back to the kitchen table, where Americans make their best decisions.

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

## « LETTERS »

# Feed hungry people, feed our nation

The writer was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1992-2003. She represented northeast North Carolina.

I've spent most of my life fighting for communities where the nearest grocery store was miles away — places called "food deserts," where hunger hides in plain sight.

Today, millions of Amer-

icans — 40 million nationwide, and 1.4 million right here in North Carolina — are wondering how they'll feed their families because Washington is playing politics with their plates of food.

This isn't about left or right. It's about right and wrong. A hungry child can't learn. A hungry worker can't focus. A hun-

gry nation can't thrive. Feeding our hungry neighbors isn't charity — it's our moral duty and in our American interest and promise.

So, I ask our elected leaders: Where is your compassion? Where is your courage? Where is your hu-

manity? Two federal Judges have

funds within USDA are available to fund SNAP. Mr. President and Congress, there is no excuse. Fund SNAP to provide food for our hungry neighbors.

America needs your strong moral leadership.

Eva Clayton

Warrenton, NC

## Are Dem wins a sign of the times?

There is something about winning that gives us hope. It makes for a better day and allows us to have some joy.

Winning is a term that all of us understand and probably been associated with at different points in our lives. We have won in life whether it has been in our jobs or in sports.

It is not easy to do. Everyone wants to be a winner, however there is some work attached to it. Yet those who win sometimes lose their edge. They become complacent and take it for granted.

During the last election season, the GOP made a lot of promises and won over the American voters. All seemed right with the world. The new president had everything that he could have possibly wanted.

He gained control of both the Senate, the House of Representatives and used the Supreme Court to his advantage. Legislation was being signed signaling new rules and regulations. Ex-

ecutive orders were coming out of the White House at a rapid pace. Reports indicate the new president has signed 212 executive orders.

The people who voted for the new administration believed the promises they made. They were expecting better days ahead. The citizens who didn't vote for the new White House team knew bad days were right around the corner.

Well, those folks were right. They are now simply using the old expression "I told you so."

The new administration underestimated the I told you so crowd and the power of the vote showed itself on Nov. 4.

New Jersey, Virginia, California and Georgia had victories for the Democrats. They were much needed because some pundits were saying that they had lost their way. Well, you shouldn't jump to those conclusions after what happened last week. The Democrats are still alive and kicking.

Mikie Sherrill is now the new governor of New Jersey and Abigail Spanberger will hold the same position in Virginia.

Gov.-elect Sherrill said,

"Trump administration's policies were raising costs on everything from a cup of coffee to your groceries." Spanberger said, "We sent a message to every corner of the commonwealth, a message to our neighbors and across the country. We chose our commonwealth over chaos."

In California, voters said yes to redrawing new congressional voting lines. California political strategist, Erica Kwiatkowski Nielsen said, "I think the campaign did a fantastic job of saying and acknowledging people's fears that hey, we've been a leader in California on redistricting, but this isn't politics as usual. These are unprecedeted times."

In Georgia, Democrats Peter Hubbard and Alicia Johnson won seats on the Public Service Commission. Reports show this was a landmark election. It is the first time since 2006 that Democrats have won a statewide constitutional office in Georgia.

Will these victories move the political needle for the Democratic Party in the mid-term elections? Many critics believe that it will. They say that momentum

is on the side of the Democrats.

These wins come at an opportune time for them because polls show that many Americans are not satisfied with what the new president is doing. Surveys also show that the Republicans are to blame for the shutdown.

On Nov. 9, the Senate passed legislation that if approved by the House of Representatives will bring a halt to the government shutdown. House Speaker Mike Johnson must now reconvene the lower chamber to get a vote. This will bring some temporary relief to the millions of people who are suffering.

Politico reports, "The 60-40 vote to take the first step toward ending the shutdown came hours after enough Democrats agreed to support a package that would fund multiple agencies and programs for the full fiscal year, and all others until January 30, 2026." If things go as planned, the United States government could reopen late next week. We'll see.

James Ewers is an author and member of the National Association of Black Journalists.

## Rot of anti-intellectualism, demagoguery

As a kid, my favorite part of grocery shopping wasn't the snacks or the cereal aisle, it was the tabloids at the checkout.

I'd devour headlines about Batboy sightings, Bigfoot vacations, royal scandals, and the occasional presidential summit with extraterrestrials.

These were absurdities printed with a straight face, and the comedy was half the fun.

I didn't expect that, decades later, those supermarket fever dreams would feel less like parody and more like prophecy. The fantasies that once lived on cheap newsprint now pulse through mainstream culture. In the social media age, anything can be "true" if it flatters your bias or fuels your outrage. And with AI dissolving the already thin boundary between fact and fiction, we've entered an era where reality feels optional, truth feels negotiable, and the most sensational lie travels at the speed of an algorithm.

In this environment, "common sense," emotion, and personal anecdote have muscled into spaces once reserved for evidence and expertise. But there's nothing "common sense" about medicine, climate science, gender identity, or any other complex system that shapes human life. Yet this appeal to "what feels right" has become the jet fuel of America's culture war.

If the issue seems simple to me, it should be simple to you.

And if you disagree, you're elitist or part of a hidden agenda. This flattening of complexity has turned ignorance into authenticity and expertise into betrayal.

This is anti-intellectualism, and though accelerating, it isn't new. Richard Hofstadter warned in the 1960s of a growing American suspicion of expertise, a belief that intelligence itself was untrustworthy.

What was once a cultural tendency has hardened

into a political identity and, increasingly, a governing philosophy.

It's also tied to a literacy crisis hiding in plain sight. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 21% of U.S. adults struggle with "Level 1" literacy, basic decoding with limited comprehension, and 34% of adults perform at "Below Level 2," meaning they cannot reliably compare or integrate information across texts. The more recent NCES update shows low literacy rates increasing, with "Below Level 2" rising from 29% to 34% as of 2024.

When millions of adults struggle to process dense or complex information, it creates a vacuum easily filled by conspiracies, oversimplifications, and the comforting illusion of "common sense."

Demagoguery is nothing new. America has always had its fire-breathers: Father Charles Coughlin, U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy, Alabama Gov. George Wallace each exploiting fear and resentment to build a following. But today's demagogues operate at a scale those predecessors could never imagine.

They don't need studios or rallies; they have live-streams, podcasts, and algorithmic megaphones engineered to reward outrage.

They arrive faster, louder, and more frequently, wrapped in hashtags and monetized resentment.

And the consequences are here.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories cost lives, and respected public health officials like Dr. Anthony Fauci required armed protection because lies about him were politically profitable.

Now, in 2025, with an anti-vaccine activist running the nation's top health agency, the results are already visible: the cases, the highest in decades. And public health ex-

perts warn of substantial future outbreaks if vaccination rates continue to slide.

Diseases we once defeated are back, thriving in the cracks created by disinformation.

Meanwhile, democratic institutions are being bent to the breaking point. Corruption has become so blatant it barely registers, swallowed by a public numb to the abuses that should set off alarms. The Constitution is increasingly treated not as a guardrail but as a stage prop in a political theater of grievance.

The rot is real. The danger is real. But so is the possibility of renewal, if we choose it. America's collapse is not inevitable. It becomes inevitable only if we surrender to silence, cynicism, or the seductive pull of simple lies.

Part of that renewal requires speaking truth to power. And the truth is dangerous, dangerous enough that elements of the current political establishment are working overtime to curb it.

We see this in legislative attempts to abolish the Department of Education; in state-level campaigns attacking universities and academic freedom; in coordinated pushes to remove books from classrooms and libraries; in efforts to suppress votes through restrictive election laws; and in the deliberate sidelining of politicians who refuse to bow to party orthodoxy.

These are not the actions of leaders confident in the strength of their ideas. They reflect a deeper fear of an informed public, of citizens who question, analyze, and think critically enough to see through political performance.

Their fear, their terror of an educated public, is proof of how powerful the truth still is. And a reminder that defending it is not only an act of courage. It is an act of national survival.

Jared O. Bell, syndicated with PeaceVoice, is a former U.S. diplomat and scholar of human rights and transitional justice, dedicated to advancing global equity and systemic reform.



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith defensive tackle Cadricus Stanley (22) and linebacker Chris Jackson tackle Virginia Union running back Curtis Allen in the Golden Bulls' 45-21 win. JCSU outscored VUU 24-7 in the second half to pull away to the Golden Bulls' first CIAA title since 1969.

## JCSU's November to remember

The Golden Bulls ride momentum of CIAA title into their first NCAA playoffs berth as No. 2 seed

By Herbert L. White

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Postseason football is a new experience at Johnson C. Smith.

The Golden Bulls, who earned the school's first berth in the Division II playoffs by winning the CIAA title last week, are neophytes in the field of 32. Their first test is Saturday when they take on Frostburg (Md.) State at McGirt Field in the first meeting between the teams.

"We know they're a good football team - 9-2 this season - and we know in the playoffs, there are no accidents," Golden Bulls coach Maurice Flowers

said. "In the playoffs, you've got tough teams that are going to be there."

The second seed Golden Bulls (10-1, No. 11 in the nation), who beat Virginia Union 45-21 to earn their first CIAA title since 1969, are tough, too. In seizing the conference crown, JCSU had to win six straight games to qualify for the championship round, then beat the nationally ranked Panthers in a rematch of the Sept. 20 game. Virginia Union won 28-10.

"This is more history for our program, this is the first playoff appearance for JCSU, so we can't lean on

experience that we've been there, done that," said Flowers, the CIAA coach of the year. "We do have some coaches that have been there in the playoffs, and so that's what we're going to lean on. But the biggest thing that we do in our program is we just trust our process. We don't change things. We believe in our preparation by day and our situations that we practice each day for each opponent as we go through the week, and our biggest thing is making sure we're healthy and ready to go compete at the highest level."



Sixth seed and 24th-ranked Frostburg State, which earned a share of the Mountain East Conference title with University of Charleston (W.Va.), advanced by winning the head-to-head tiebreaker, a 34-32 double overtime result on Oct. 18. The Bobcats, who are 22nd in the nation in total defense, lead the MEC in scoring defense at 19.9 points per game, total defense (302.5 yards), and pass defense (152.7 yards). Frostburg State has a potent offense that averages 32.55 points and 398.1 yards per game.

JCSU, on the other hand, set school

Please see GOLDEN | 8A

## Conference title caps long and winding path to redemption

By Herbert L. White

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Johnson C. Smith's 53-year road to football relevance is complete.

The Golden Bulls' first CIAA title since 1969, a dominant 45-21 win against Virginia Union Saturday at Durham County Stadium, put an emphatic stamp on the school's best season. JCSU (10-1, 7-1 CIAA) earned redemption for a 28-10 loss to the Panthers (9-2, 7-1) on Sept. 20 by beating VUU in every phase. As a result, the Golden Bulls, ranked a program-high No. 11 in Division II, earned an automatic berth

to the national playoffs and ran their win streak to seven straight - one shy of the program record set last year.

"I'm just so happy to be part of it as I'm an alumnus and a Charlottean and just so happy for our coaching staff, our young men and the work they put in and so happy for the ones that put the foundation in when we started this four years ago," fourth-year coach Maurice Flowers said.

JCSU, playing in its first championship round since 1972, started quickly, with Daryl Taybron's recovery of a Curtis Allen fumble into a 19-yard

scoring pass three minutes in. Virginia Union counted with a pair of touchdown runs before the Golden Bulls ripped off 21 unanswered points to break the game open. JCSU's All-CIAA tandem of quarterback Kelvin Durham and title game MVP Biggie Proctor were the instigators, starting with a 25-yard connection 4:24 before intermission backed by a 58-yard and Durham's 4-yard run in the third quarter. Proctor finished with seven catches for 146 yards and a pair of scores.

"We know we couldn't take our foot off the gas," said Durham (16-of-29,

285 yards, five touchdowns). "No matter what the score was, we had to keep on scoring and scoring fast and keep on playing our kind of football. We were in the mindset of not letting up, just keep going until it's all zeroes on the scoreboard."

Durham dazzled in the first half, hitting 10-of-14 passes for 161 yards and three scores in executing JCSU's offensive game plan - run Bobby Smith (23 carries, 78 yards) to keep Virginia Union honest while pushing the ball deep after loosening the Panthers' sec-

Please see CIAA | 6A

## MLS votes to follow European sporting calendar

By Steve Goldberg

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

If you enjoy Charlotte FC matches on hot summer days, there will be fewer in the future.

After 30 years, the MLS Board of Governors voted last week to move the league schedule from late winter-to-fall to late summer-to-spring. The new format, expected to begin in 2027, will align MLS with the world's top soccer leagues. The change must also be approved by the MLS Players Association.

The 2027-28 regular season will kick off in mid-to-late July 2027 and conclude in late May 2028. It will include a winter break from mid-December through early February, with no matches in January. What that will mean for teams with harsher winter climates in the northeast and midwest is still to be determined.

The league says "it conducted extensive weather and logistics analyses to ensure a high-quality fan experience. While the final schedule footprint is still being determined, the league intends to limit the number of home matches in northern markets during

Please see MLS | 6A



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Major League Soccer leaders voted to adjust its season calendar to a summer-spring calendar that aligns with European leagues starting in 2027.

## 'I knew it was for me.' Princess approves of 49ers' approach

By Cameron Williams

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Princess Anderson rediscovered her love for basketball with the Charlotte 49ers.

The 49ers' shooting guard is averaging 15.7 points per game and had a three-game stretch where she scored 26, 26 and 27 points in consecutive games. Joining Charlotte (3-3) Anderson said, was the best decision for her.

"When I got on a call with [coach Tomeka Reed], it just felt like home," Anderson said. "Just from our talks and how they treated me, I was like, 'Oh yeah, this is the spot for me.' It was not like I had to guess, either. I knew then that it was the place for me."

Anderson started her college journey at Pratt Community College in Kansas, where

she led the National Junior College Athletic Association in scoring at 26.7 points per game. Anderson transferred to Wichita State, where she played in 27 games with five starts. Anderson played in Halton Arena last year with the Shockers, where she had a team high 21 points. Reed took notice.

"I got a call from this guy I was in a head coaching program with," Reed said. "He was telling me about this player that was entering the portal from Wichita State. Come to find out, it was Princess. So, when we looked at her stats and saw she was only playing about 14 minutes per game and around 10-12 points. We thought we could give her more playing time and ultimately be more produc-

tive. So, we brought her on a visit."

Anderson admitted to struggling with her passion for basketball. "[My college journey] quite honestly has not been the best," she said, "but I am going to make the best of it. I am just really glad to be here. I am glad I have re-found the love for basketball. At some point along the way I started losing my love for it, but I am happy to be here and have found it again and be where I am at."

During Anderson's visit with Charlotte, Reed could tell something was bothering her. She picked up on the recruit's demeanor and had a heart to heart with Anderson.

"On her visit, I saw that she was struggling."

Please see PRINCESS | 6A

## A familiar, sad refrain of Hornets injuries

It is beginning to sound like a broken record screeching on a turntable.

Here we are not even halfway through November and the Hornets are struggling, in large part because players weren't available due to injuries, notably LaMelo Ball (ankle) and Brandon Miller (shoulder).

Miller has played just two games but averaged 20 points per outing. Ball, who returned last week, leads Charlotte in scoring average with 23.3 per game. It isn't rocket science. This team is better when Ball and Miller play.

While the Hornets were just 1-1 when Ball and Miller were playing simultaneously, one can never truly know what this team would look like 10 games in with them not having played together.

Hornets coach Charles Lee said before the Lakers game that Ball and his camp have a plan of action to maximize the number of games he is able to play in — but all but pleaded the Fifth when asked about a timetable for his return.

"I'm actually excited about the progress that he's been



CAMERON WILLIAMS

Please see INJURIES | 6A



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith football coaches and players are doused with water after their 45-21 win against Virginia Union in the CIAA title game Nov. 15 at Durham County Stadium. The Golden Bulls (10-1) clinched an automatic berth in the Division II playoffs and the first 10-win season in school history.

## CIAA title caps long road to redemption

Continued from page 5A

ondary on the perimeter. The Golden Bulls' initiative included springing surprises like handing the ball to Proctor on running plays and throwing to tight ends as well as an efficient 9-of-12 on third down chances.

As sterling as the Golden Bulls were on offense, JCSU's defense was dominant, limiting the Panthers' potent running attack and forcing Virginia Union to compensate through the air. Curtis Allen, who rushed for more than 2,000 yards to earn the CIAA's offensive MVP, finished with 183 yards and two touchdowns on 25 carries, including 48 yards on 14 first-half carries.

Once JCSU opened a two-score advantage, Virginia Union, which won the previous two conference titles and advanced to the third round of last year's playoffs, was forced to go away from its strength, which played into the Golden Bulls' hands. Required to take to the air against the swarming Golden Bulls, Panthers quarterback R.J. Rosales struggled to 10-of-22 passing for 150 yards and a pair of interceptions. Vincent Hill paced JCSU with seven tackles, while South Mecklenburg High grad Jalen Alexander, Cadarius Stanley and Ty Hines chipped in with six each.

Outside of Allen's 5-yard scoring run with 4:16 left, JCSU beat Virginia Union physically in the second half with a

scheme that wore the Panthers down on both sides of the ball. Fifty-six years between championships was an extra incentive for JCSU, who went from afterthought to CIAA power during Flowers' tenure. There's more to accomplish.

"We've learned from a lot of teams from the CIAA before and a lot of teams before Virginia Union, it was win the CIAA championship and that was the highlight of the season," Flowers said. "From the beginning when we started this four years ago, it wasn't to be just CIAA champion, we wanted to build a Division II contender. We wanted to contend for a national championship at Johnson C. Smith University. Winning the CIAA championship was one of our goals and we wanted to have a deep run for a national championship."

For a season that set new standards of accomplishments, the Golden Bulls added to the program's history. JCSU earned its first 10-win campaign and a first-round home playoff game against Frostburg State. The Golden Bulls, who are seeded second in Super Region 1, took down Virginia Union, the region's second-ranked team and No. 9 nationally.

"We're going to enjoy this one, that's for doggone sure," Flowers said. "We waited more than 50 years for this one."

## Golden Bulls (10-1) continue their November to remember

Continued from page 5A

records for wins in a season, points scored (405), scoring average (36.0 points) and yards per game (405). All-CIAA quarterback Kelvin Durham set single season standards for total offense (2,957 yards), touchdown passes (25), passing yardage (2,717) and completion percentage (64.7%).

Three receivers accounted for at least five scores: All-conference pick Deandre Proctor (nine), Reggie Daniel (six) and Brian Lane (five).

All-CIAA running back Bobby Smith is 11 rushing yards short of becoming the first Golden Bull to eclipse the 1,000-yard barrier since Emanuel Wilson amassed 1,040 in 2019.

JCSU's defense, led by all-conference linebacker Vincent Hill (75 tackles) and defensive tackle Cadarius Stanley (32 tackles, four sacks), is 19th in the nation in total defense. The Golden Bulls concede an average of 16.9 points and 299.9 yards an outing and tallied 29

sacks and 14 takeaways, including 10 interceptions.

JCSU's preparation will focus on fine tuning what they've done well, especially during a seven-game win streak, the second-longest in program history, after their lone loss.

"We respect every opponent, but our focus is going to be on us and how we go about our preparation for our process," Flowers said.

For a program emerging on the national stage after decades off the football map, JCSU is doing the unprecedented, Flowers' objective since he took over four years ago. The climb has been steady and Saturday's game - a home date, no less - is the reward.

"I just can't even start to fathom it yet, because it's a home playoff game on our campus, and something that's never been done before," he said. "This is one of our one of our goals. We wanted to go to the Division II playoffs and compete for a national championship, so here we go."



Durham



Proctor



Stanley

### « MAGNIFICENT SEVEN »

## Lions vs. Mustangs highlight third round of 8A tournament

By Herbert L. White

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The Magnificent Seven has four teams chasing state high school football titles, but bound to lose at least one after Friday.

Mecklenburg County's top three squads from last week - Hough, West Charlotte and Independence - are joined by Myers Park, which moved up from fifth. West Charlotte, seeded second in the West 8A bracket, and Myers Park will square

off in the 8A tournament's third round.

In addition to the Lions-Mustangs scrap, No. 3 Independence takes on Richmond Senior, a perennial state power, in the 7A tournament. Top-ranked Hough, the No. 1 seed in 8A West bracket, takes on West Forsyth in the third round.

Olympic, which was fourth last week, dropped a spot, followed by Providence and Palisades. All three have been eliminated

from contention.

Here's this week's Magnificent Seven, with overall record in parentheses and regular season ranking:

1. Hough (11-0, first). The top ranked squad brushed off No. 7 Palisades 63-7 in a coldly efficient dismantling. The Huskies are still the class of Mecklenburg and they'll move outside the county with West Forsyth coming in for the third round of 8A playoffs.

2. West Charlotte (9-2,

## MLS votes to follow the European soccer calendar

Continued from page 5A

December and February."

While the start and end dates will change, the league says "the vast majority of MLS matches will still be played within the same general timeframe" as the current schedule. Their initial projections for 2027-28 indicate that 91% of matches will fall within the current MLS season window. The off-season would now essentially be six weeks for playoff teams from the end of May into July, part of which would be pre-season training.

A spokesman for Charlotte FC says the club is supportive of the change.

Currently, the only American professional league to use the international calendar is the women's first division tier Gainbridge Super League, which includes the Carolina Ascent. The NWSL, currently in the playoffs of its 13th season, uses the winter-to-fall schedule similar to MLS.

"The calendar shift is one of the most important decisions in our history," said MLS Commissioner Don Garber. "Aligning our schedule with the world's top leagues will strengthen our clubs' global competitiveness, create better opportunities in the

transfer market, and ensure our Audi MLS Cup Playoffs take center stage without interruption. It marks the start of a new era for our league and for soccer in North America."

Historically, professional outdoor soccer in the United States has been a summer game, primarily to separate it from NFL and college football schedules that dominate stadia and television from August to January. It was the standard operating procedure for the defunct North American Soccer League (1968-1984, 2011-2017) and American Soccer League (1921-1983).

The USL operates two professional tiers, the Division 2 Championship and Division 3 level USL One, which includes the Charlotte Independence, which are expected to remain on the spring-to-fall schedule. The announced USL Division 1 tier, proposed to begin in 2028, has yet to be officially sanctioned by U.S. Soccer.

The third-tier MLS Next Pro, which includes Crown Legacy, Charlotte FC's developmental second team, also has non-MLS affiliated teams. The status of their schedule has not been changed but is under consideration.



CHARLOTTE ATHLETICS

Princess Anderson rediscovered her passion for basketball at Charlotte, and the 49ers are benefiting from the guard's average of 15.7 points per game.

## Princess redisovers hoops love

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Reed said. "I remember looking at her and saying, 'You don't seem happy. Is this what you want to do? Do you love the game of basketball? I don't want to bring you down here if you don't love it.' She looked at me with a down face and I told her, 'You have to find your love again.' So, we talked about ways we can help her do that and now she is happy again and seeing her smile is something I haven't seen in a long time. It is great to see."

Mid-major program roster turnover is always very high and Charlotte has just three returning players from last season's roster. But Anderson and Reed both said the camaraderie and togetherness of this group is high and organic.

"We are still learning," Anderson said. "We are still learning from each other, but

we have all the pieces we need. We are together and if we stay together and play the way we do, we will be a [good team]."

Said Reed: "We normally do a lot of team building activities in the summer, but this summer we maybe did two. The players were just always together and would send me pictures. They would be at each other's apartments playing Fortnite and other games like Roblox and just all the time they were together....

"In terms of liking each other, at first it was a problem because I told them, 'You guys love each other too much.' They can stay tight but if one player isn't going hard enough, I need y'all to let them know. But, overall, it helps tremendously when you have a new roster and they already love each other."

## Injuries and opportunities

Continued from page 5A

making," Lee said last week. "Every day, I feel like he's feeling a little bit better and able to do more on the court. And so I think our training staff and him have sat down, all three of us actually and laid out a plan. And Melo is excited about it, I'm excited about it and our organization is excited about it. At the end of the day, we're trying to just focus on how we can continue to maximize how many games he can play this season."

Well, that is great.

However, this seems to be the same song and dance every season. All offseason the narrative was that Ball was getting stronger and that he is healthier than ever. Well, that has yet to be proven true and while fans and the organization may not want to face the truth, Ball is injury prone.

On the bright side — if there is one — the Hornets are seeing high-level play from their 2025 draft picks. Fourth overall pick Kon Knueppel has been playing at a level that many would not have expected. He leads all rookies in scoring at 16.4 per game and is also contributing at a high level with six rebounds per game. Against

the Lakers, Knueppel was one assist shy of a triple double.

Even Knueppel alluded to the fact that it is hard to know where your team is whenever you don't have a full accompaniment of players available.

"It's hard when you're not whole," Knueppel said. "It's really hard to see where we're at and it's tough because guys have to embrace roles that are maybe different than in the preseason. That's frustrating, and losing is frustrating, but we'll keep at it."

Lee is impressed by Knueppel's growth.

"Kon just continues to be Kon," Lee said, "and he's growing every day. The matchups he's getting defensively, the different coverages — he's able to expand his game on that end. Offensively, he wants to mix it up in every possible facet and impact the game in every way he can; rebounding, making the right plays for his teammates and himself. ... [I am] proud of the contribution he gave today. When he plays like that, he helps himself and our team as well."

Cameron Williams covers the Charlotte Hornets for The Post.

### « MAGNIFICENT SEVEN »

## Lions vs. Mustangs highlight third round of 8A tournament

By Herbert L. White

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The Magnificent Seven has four teams chasing state high school football titles, but bound to lose at least one after Friday.

Mecklenburg County's top three squads from last week - Hough, West Charlotte and Independence - are joined by Myers Park, which moved up from fifth. West Charlotte, seeded second in the West 8A bracket, and Myers Park will square

off in the 8A tournament's third round.

In addition to the Lions-Mustangs scrap, No. 3 Independence takes on Richmond Senior, a perennial state power, in the 7A tournament. Top-ranked Hough, the No. 1 seed in 8A West bracket, takes on West Forsyth in the third round.

Olympic, which was fourth last week, dropped a spot, followed by Providence and Palisades. All three have been eliminated

from contention.

Here's this week's Magnificent Seven, with overall record in parentheses and regular season ranking:

1. Hough (11-0, first). The top ranked squad brushed off No. 7 Palisades 63-7 in a coldly efficient dismantling. The Huskies are still the class of Mecklenburg and they'll move outside the county with West Forsyth coming in for the third round of 8A playoffs.

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5. Olympic (9-3, fourth). The Trojans crashed out with a 42-6 loss to Sun Valley in the 6A second round.

6. Providence (8-4, sixth). The Panthers didn't have much of a chance against West Charlotte, taking a 41-0 loss to close their season.

7. Palisades (8-4, seventh). The Pumas were bounced from the 8A draw via 63-7 loss to No. 1 Hough, but overall a good season for a young program.