

## Fact Friday 34 - Road to the Super Bowl: The Carolina Panthers' Unforgettable First Championship Season

Happy Friday Panthers fans!

This week is special, without a doubt. If ever there was an article that we've done that you should share with friends, family, and coworkers, it's this one. The entire city is gearing up for the Panthers to take on the Broncos on Sunday and bring an NFL championship back to the Queen City! I'm mean, I've even seen signs redirecting traffic where the lights have been programmed to say "DAB ON 'EM!!" If that's not the stamp of approval, then I don't know what is.

But as I've been mentally gearing up for the game over the past couple of days, I decided to go ahead and start flipping through one of my most prized possessions when it comes to the Panthers... a book that sits on my coffee table and within arms reach all year long... a copy of "Road to the Super Bowl: The Carolina Panthers' Unforgettable Championship Season." Paid for by the Belk Corporation and containing a letter/forward, by none other than then-CEO John M. Belk himself, the book was meant to tell the entire story of the our boys' first run at the Lombardi trophy. All the ups, and the downs, obstacles overcome, triumphs, heartaches, defeats, ironies, and heartfelt moments of compassion... all of it, and how it all brought the city together in a way that had never been done before. Panthers fans of old will see and reminisce over many familiar names. Ah, memory lane.

Initially, I thought I would find some cool fact in the book to share with you all, but the more I looked over it through a historic lens, the more I realized I couldn't simply choose a piece of it. Each piece is not as meaningful without the rest. When Aristotle said "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," he wasn't talking about this book, but if he'd seen it, he'd say that it definitely applies.

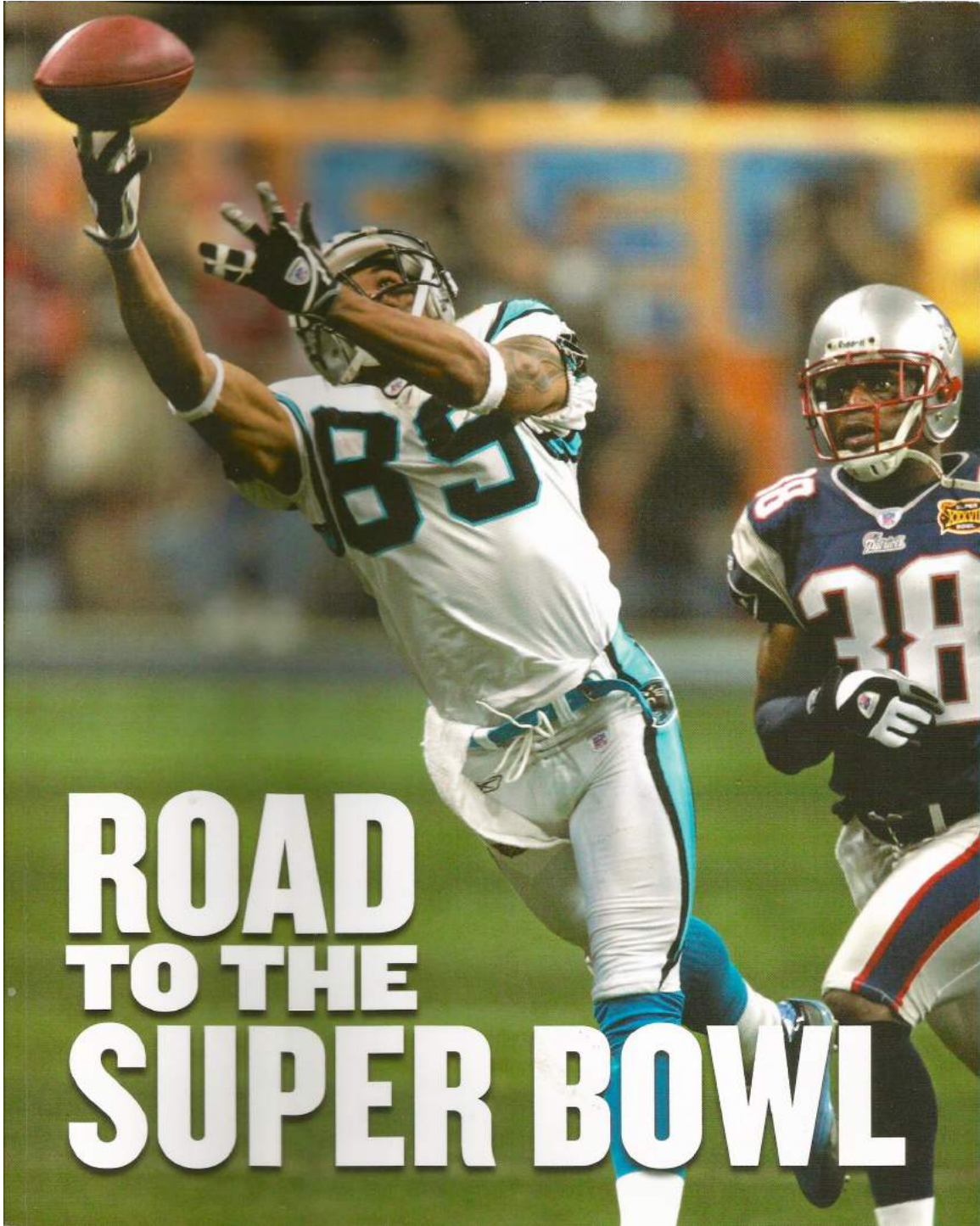
With that said, here's the **entire work** for your enjoyment! Now, it's Friday. No one's doing any work anyway. So stop what you're doing and take a journey back to our 2003-2004! You have my permission ;-)

Until next week!

Chris.

Email me at [chris@704Shop.com](mailto:chris@704Shop.com) if you have interesting Charlotte facts you'd like to share or just to provide feedback!

"We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future." – Frederick Douglass

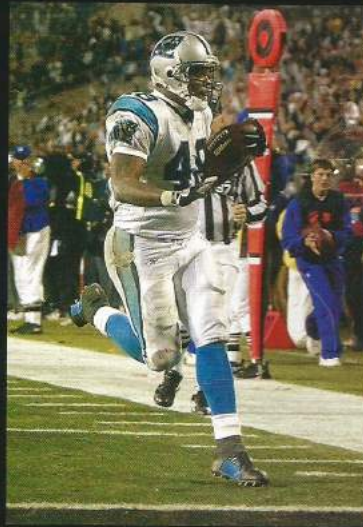


**ROAD  
TO THE  
SUPER BOWL**

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**PRESENTS**

# **ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL**

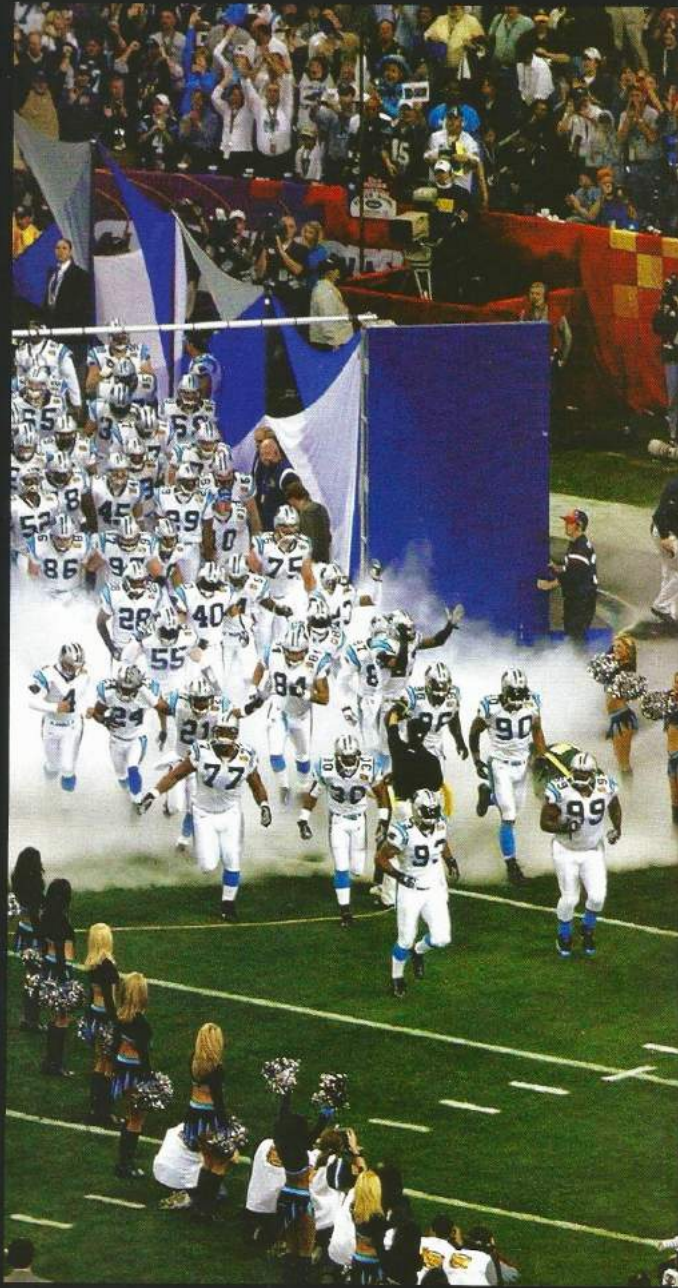
**The Carolina Panthers' Unforgettable Season**

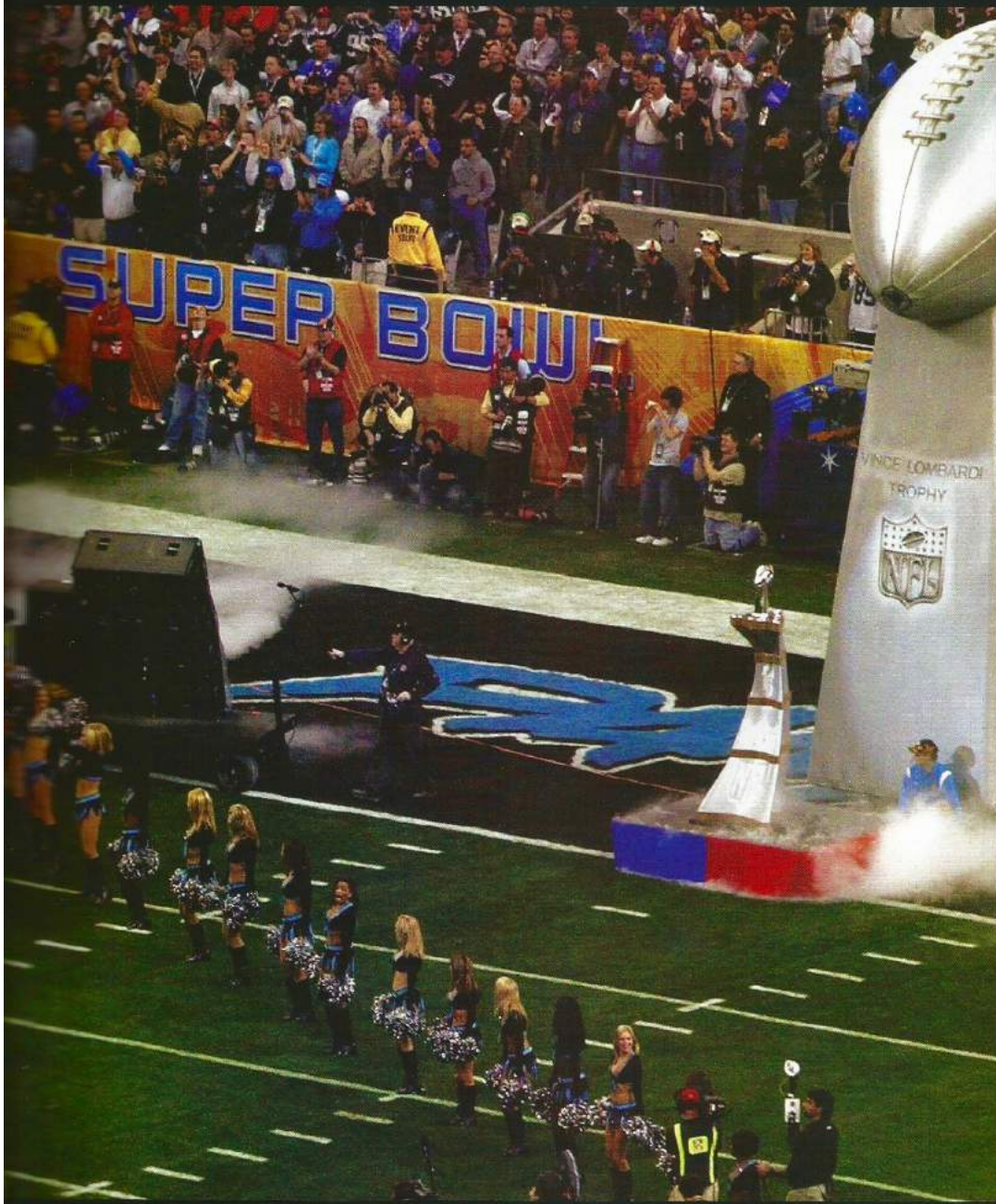


**EDITED BY MICHELLE WHITE**

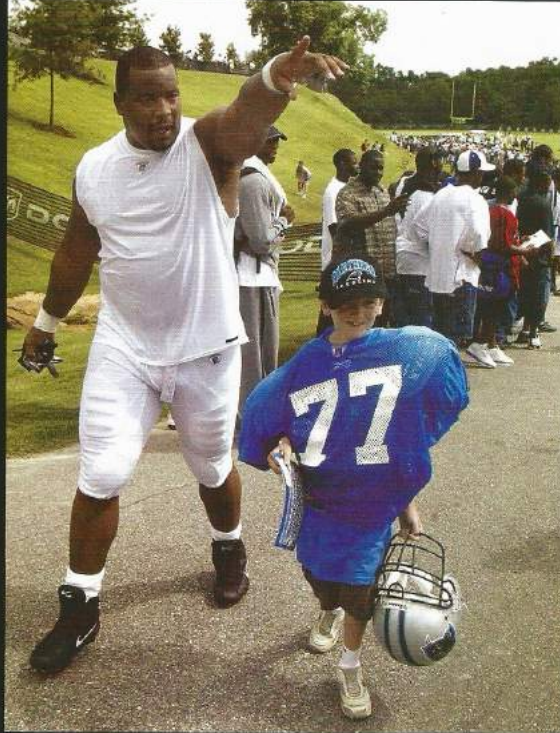
# 2003 Carolina Panthers' Road to the Super Bowl

Date	Opponent	Result	Score
Sept. 7	Jacksonville	Win	24-23
Sept. 14	Tampa Bay	Win	12-9
Sept. 28	Atlanta	Win	23-3
Oct. 5	New Orleans	Win	19-13
Oct. 12	Indianapolis	Win	23-20
Oct. 19	Tennessee	Loss	17-37
Oct. 26	New Orleans	Win	23-20
Nov. 2	Houston	Loss	10-14
Nov. 9	Tampa Bay	Win	27-24
Nov. 16	Washington	Win	20-17
Nov. 23	Dallas	Loss	20-24
Nov. 30	Philadelphia	Loss	16-25
Dec. 7	Atlanta	Loss	14-20
Dec. 14	Arizona	Win	20-17
Dec. 21	Detroit	Win	20-14
Dec. 28	New York Giants	Win	37-24
Jan. 3	Dallas	Win	29-10
Jan. 10	St. Louis	Win	29-23
Jan. 18	Philadelphia	Win	14-3
Feb. 1	New England	Loss	29-32





# A Season Full of Memories That Will Last a Long, Long Time



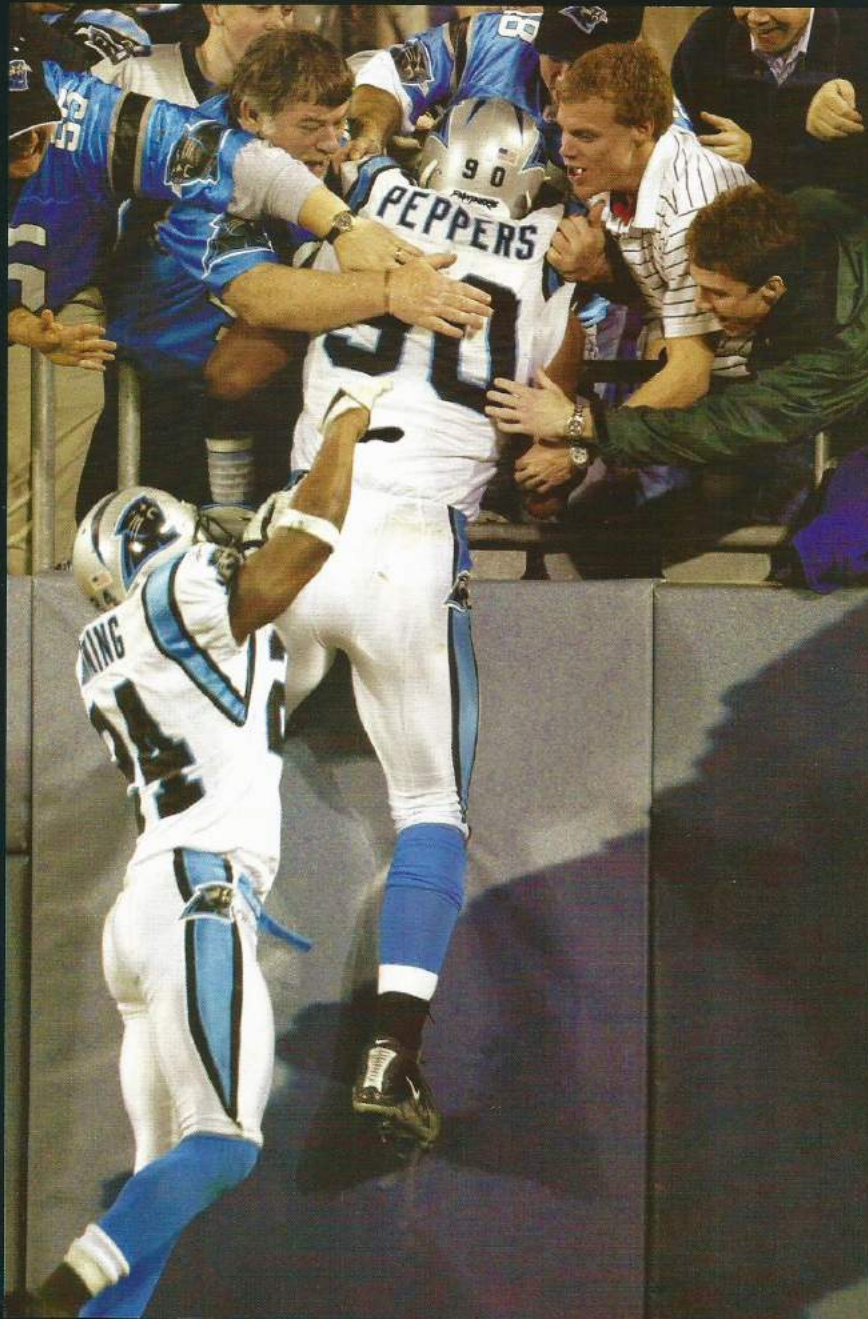
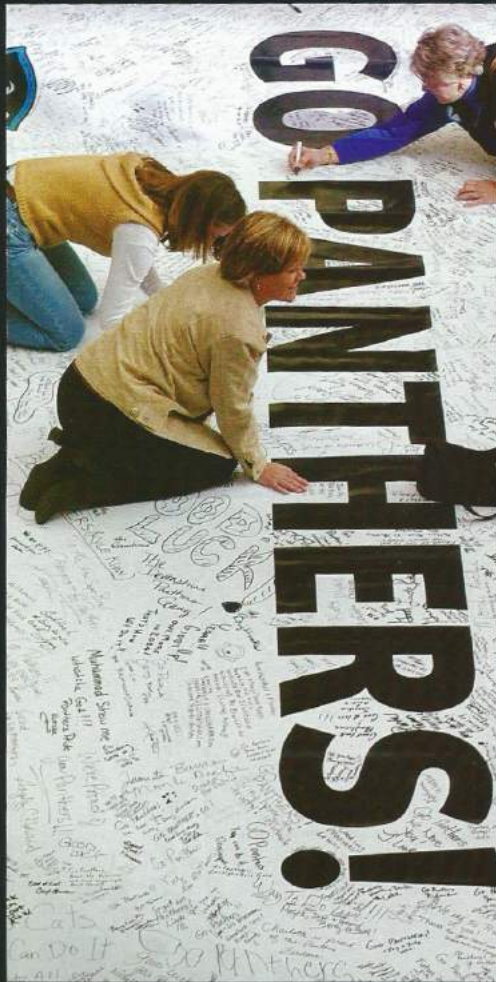


PHOTO GALLERY







*The articles, "Life Is Tough, and That Is the Way the Panthers' Fox Likes It," "Delhomme Turns His Bayou Home Blue and Black," "For Panthers' Morgan, Pen Is Mightier," "Panthers Lineman Is Inspired by a Dying Child's Wish," "Panthers' Owner Caught Unitas and Talked Back to Halas," "Two Diagnoses of Cancer Teach Panthers About Fight," "Delhomme Kept On Fighting to the Finish" and "Vinatieri Wins It Again With Field Goal in Final Seconds" were originally published in **The New York Times**. Reprinted by permission.*

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February 1, 2004

**BEYOND IMAGINATION!**

Who would have thought in just nine short years that the Carolina Panthers would be the National Football Conference Champions!

From the inception to the realization of a NFL Professional Team in the Carolinas in 1995 to the Super Bowl of 2004, I've watched the team grow and mature. I've cheered the team on to victory and remained steadfast even in the face of adversity and defeat. Looking forward, not back, I've never given up on the dream of the Carolina Panthers becoming the pride of the Carolinas and the NFL.

Even with a season that unfolded with more enthusiasm than ever, I could only imagine where this year would lead. Knocked down but never out, the Carolina Panthers, an underdog to the end, continued winning against the odds to the very end. Having said that, and witnessed first hand the will and conviction of the Panthers to win, not just today but throughout the playoffs, this victory was beyond my wildest imagination.

The Carolina Panthers has been a team with real grit along with the ability to pull a city, a state, a region, and people from all walks of life together. It has been a great team in more ways than one--not just on the field, but also in the community.

With that said, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Carolina Panthers, Head Coach John Fox, all the assistant coaches, and owner Jerry Richardson and his family. May your success continue beyond your imagination.

Sincerely,

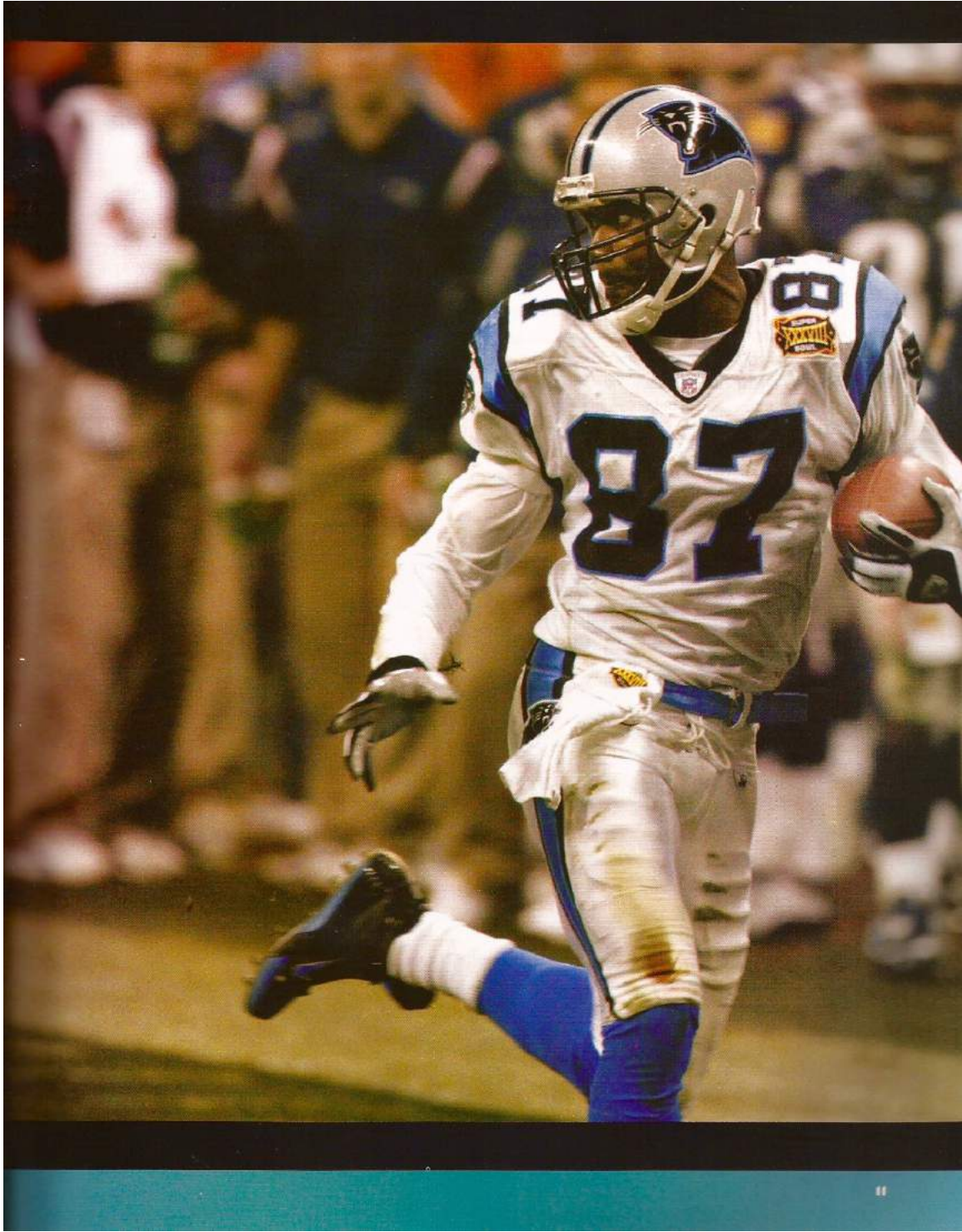
A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "John M. Belk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John M. Belk  
CEO Belk Inc.

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# Delhomme Rallies Panthers Past Jaguars

**J**ake Delhomme ran into the Carolina Panthers' huddle, fists pumping and words of encouragement flying. It was his first chance to be the starting quarterback, and Delhomme wasn't going to blow it.

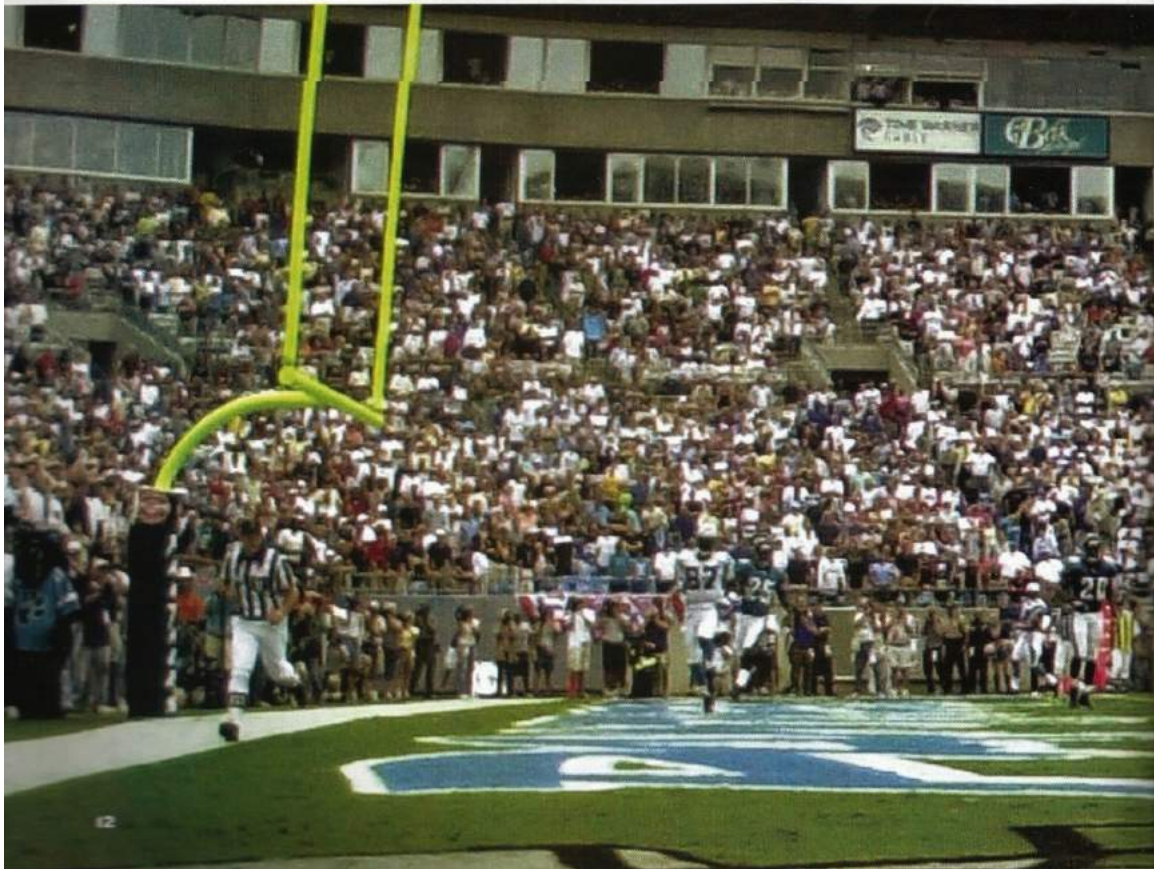
Delhomme replaced a highly ineffective Rodney Peete at the start of the second half and energized the Panthers with a pep talk and three touchdown passes — the last with 16 seconds to play — to rally the Panthers to a 24-23 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars in

today's opener.

"He came in and kind of gave everyone a high-five and said, 'We're going to win the game,'" receiver Muhsin Muhammad said. "We had no doubts in our mind after that."

The Panthers trailed 17-0 when Delhomme came in, but he never panicked, not even facing fourth-and-11 on the Jaguars 12 with time ticking away.

With the defense closing in, he found Ricky Proehl, another offseason acquisition, in the left corner of the



end zone for the winning score.

"The huddle was very calm and I was very calm," Delhomme said. "I had guys in the huddle wanting the ball and that gives me confidence as a quarterback."

As the Panthers celebrated the score, new Jacksonville coach Jack Del Rio — Carolina's defensive coordinator a year ago — slumped his shoulders in disgust but wouldn't allow the Jaguars to quit.

Quarterback Mark Brunell quickly moved the Jaguars downfield, setting up rookie Seth Marler's 55-yard field goal attempt as time expired. But Mike Minter blocked the kick, then celebrated by dancing in front of Del Rio on the Jacksonville sideline before sprinting the length of the field and leaping into the stands.

Del Rio and Carolina coach John Fox, good friends

who did not look at each other as they passed at half-time, met at midfield for a brief handshake.

"When you lose by one, it's very frustrating," Del Rio said.

Del Rio then bristled when asked what the Panthers did to stop his team.

"You mean my scheme?" he said, referring to the Carolina defense he helped build. "I'm not going to get into specifics. It's the same scheme that stopped our run game."

The Panthers gave up 331 total yards, but just 75 on the ground.

Stephen Davis marked his first game as Carolina's featured running back with 111 yards rushing.

Delhomme, who spent the past five years as a backup in New Orleans, finished 12-of-20 for 122 yards passing with two interceptions and touchdown passes of 13

**Receiver Ricky Proehl (81) catches the game-tying, 12-yard TD with 16 seconds left in the fourth quarter.**



**GAME 1 | PANTHERS VS. JACKSONVILLE**

yards to Muhammad and 24 yards to Steve Smith.

But it may not have been enough to earn him the starting job next week against defending Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay.

"We needed to do something to spark our offense and I thought Jake did an outstanding job," Fox said. "We are going to enjoy this win and make decisions later."

For the entire first half, Del Rio and the Jaguars had Carolina on its heels as the 37-year-old Peete could not have played worse.

He handed off on the first play of the game to Davis, who gained 20 yards for Carolina's only first down of the half. After that, he was sacked three times, went 4-for-10 for 19 yards and led the Panthers to a total of 36 yards.

"That wasn't Rodney's fault, we were just awful — all of us," Davis said.

But Peete admitted his starting days might be over.

"It's hard to discount what he did in there in the second half," Peete said. "I still have confidence in what I can do for this football team ... but you've got to go with what happened."

Brunell finished 23-for-27 — at one point completing 13 consecutive passes — for 272 yards and two touchdowns. He threw a 65-yard TD pass to Jermaine Lewis late in the fourth quarter to put Jacksonville up 23-18.

"If you don't get the win, it's all for naught," Brunell said. "In the second half we let them back in the game and it was just a roller coaster, emotionally."

— *The Associated Press*

**Panthers quarterback Jake Delhomme (17) finished with 12 completions on 20 attempts for 122 yards and 2 TD's.**

SEPTEMBER 7, 2003

<b>Jacksonville</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>24</b>

**Scoring Summary**

**2nd Quarter**

**JAC** 9:03, Marc Edwards runs up the middle for a 2-yard TD (Seth Marler kick)

**JAC** 0:16, Mark Brunell passes to Matthew Hatchette to the left for 33-yard TD (Seth Marler kick)

**3rd Quarter**

**JAC** 9:32, Seth Marler kicks 40-yard field goal

**CAR** 6:47, Jake Delhomme passes to Muhsin Muhammad to the right for a 13-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**4th Quarter**

**CAR** 15:00, John Kasay kicks 49-yard field goal

**CAR** 14:07, Chris Hanson punt blocked, recovered by Chris Hanson for safety

**CAR** 6:47, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith to the left for 24-yard TD (2-point attempt failed, Jake Delhomme pass to Steve Smith)

**JAC** 6:04, Mark Brunell passes to Jermaine Lewis to the left for 65-yard TD (2-point attempt failed, Mark Brunell run to the left)

**CAR** 0:29, Jake Delhomme passes to Ricky Proehl to the left for 12-yard TD (2-point attempt failed, Nick Goings run to the right)

**Team Stats**

	<b>JAC</b>	<b>CAR</b>
First Downs	16	17
Rushes-Yards	27-75	25-120
Passing Yards	256	120
Comp-Att-Int	23-27-0	16-30-2
Punts-Avg.	7-45.9	7-40.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	4-0
Penalties-Yards	8-82	8-68
Time of Possession	33:23	26:37

**Individual Stats**

**Passing** — Jacksonville: Brunell 27-23-272-2.

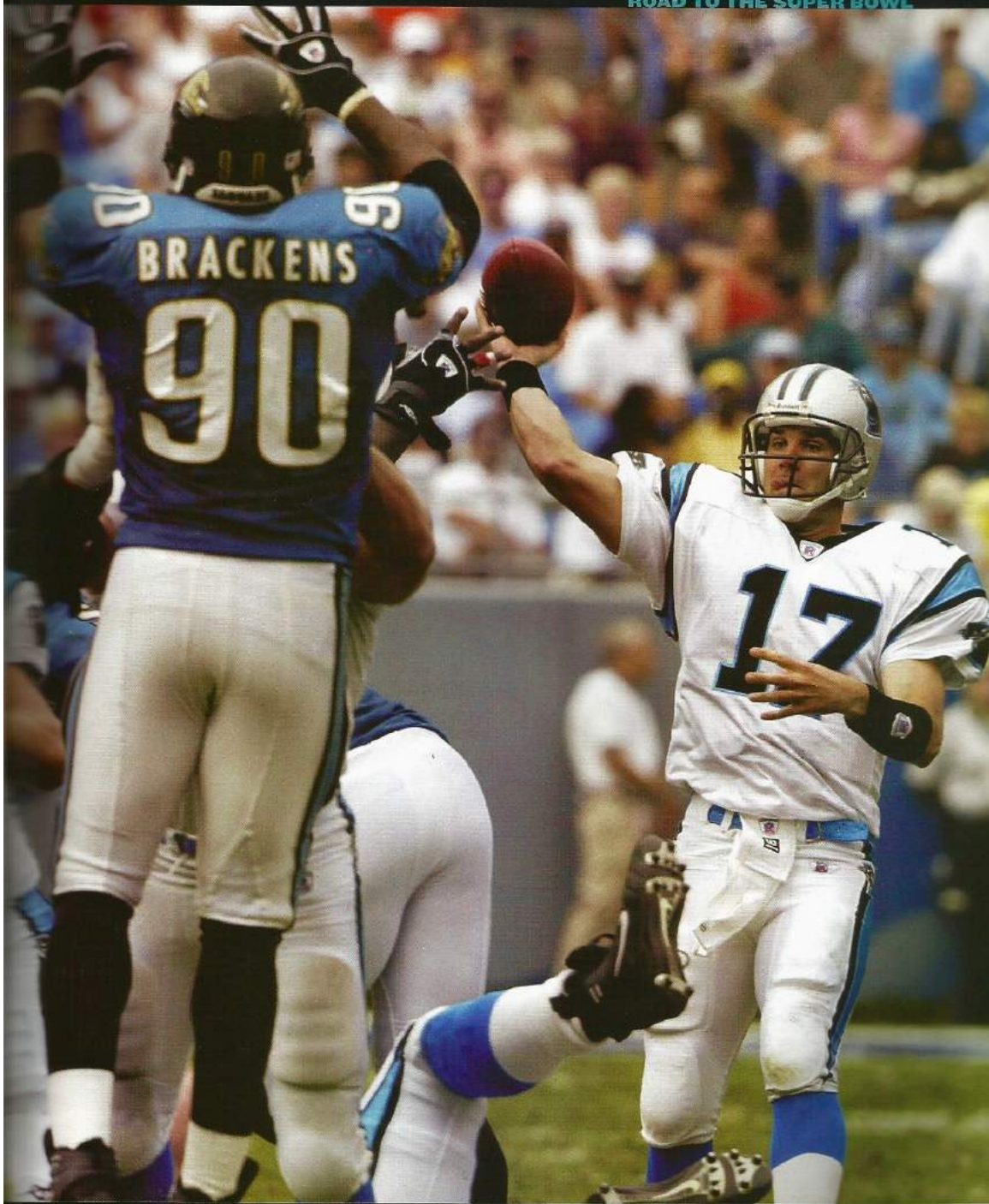
**Carolina** — Delhomme 20-12-122-3, Peete 10-4-19-0.

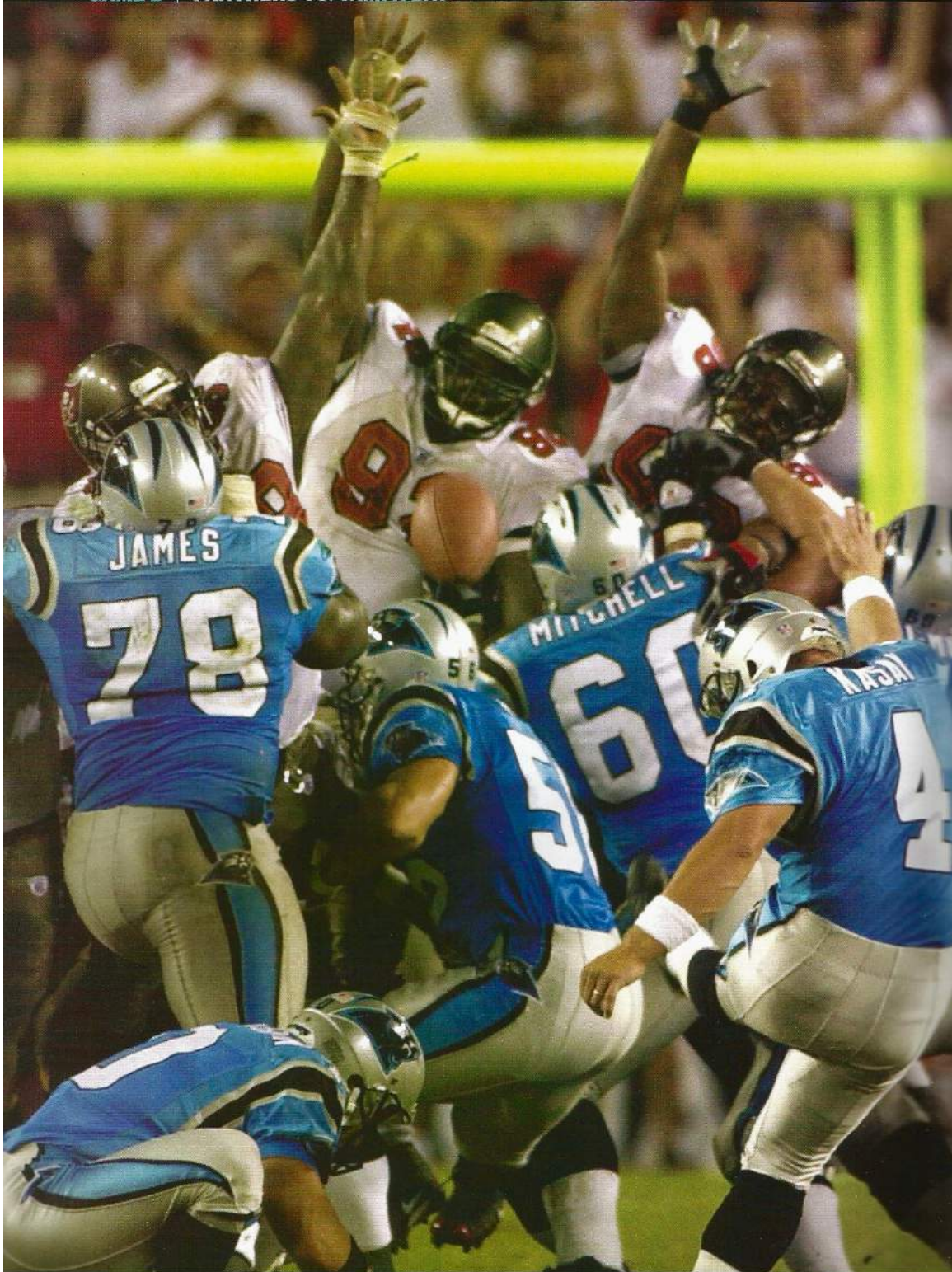
**Rushing** — Jacksonville: Taylor 22-71, Toefield 2-4, Edwards 1-2, Brunell 3-(-2). Carolina: Davis 22-111, Foster 1-6, Goings 1-4, Delhomme 3-1.

**Receiving** — Jacksonville: Stokes 6-42, Taylor 5-51, Hatchette 4-60, Lewis 3-90, Brady 1-11, Luzar 1-8, Toefield 1-3. Carolina: Smith 4-44, Mangum 3-28, Foster 3-16, Proehl 2-20, Muhammad 1-13, Davis 1-11, Hoover 1-5, Goings 1-4.

**Attendance** — 72,134







# Carolina Blocks Kick, Gains Win Over Bucs

**W**ith Tampa Bay lining up to kick an extra point with no time on the clock, the Carolina Panthers easily could have hung their heads and accepted defeat.

The Buccaneers knew they wouldn't.

"It's never over. We fight to the end," Carolina defensive tackle Brentson Buckner said after Kris Jenkins blocked what would have been a game-winning conversion by Martin Gramatica. That set the stage for the Panthers to beat the Super Bowl champions 12-9 in overtime today.

"We knew they had to go out and make the extra point. We blocked two kicks prior to that, so we thought: 'Hey, we've got a chance. ... By the grace of God we blocked it.'"

John Kasay's fourth field goal, a 47-yarder with 3:28 remaining in the extra period, capped a wild final few minutes.

The Bucs had tied it with no time left in regulation on Keenan McCardell's 6-yard reception. Considering Gramatica never missed an extra point in his career (129 attempts), the conversion seemed a formality.

Jenkins had other ideas.

"I went in and blocked it. I don't think it was rocket

**John Kasay (4) boots the game-winning, 46-yard field goal in overtime to defeat Tampa Bay.**

science or anything," said Jenkins, who also knocked down a 38-yard field goal try in the second quarter. "It was now or never. We didn't have a choice. Somebody had to get it."

Stephen Davis rushed for 142 yards and Kasay also kicked field goals of 28, 35 and 20 yards for Carolina (2-0), which set up Kasay's game-winner with Steve Smith's 52-yard punt return to the Tampa Bay 40.

Last week, the Panthers also blocked a punt for a safety and blocked a 55-yard field goal attempt to save a 24-23 win over Jacksonville.

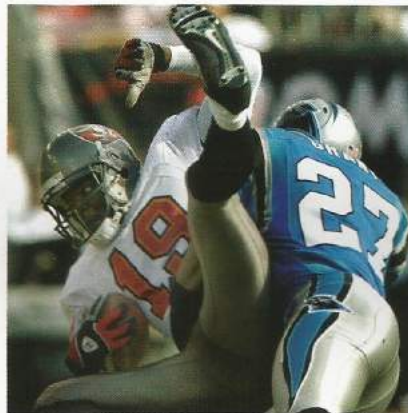
Six days after opening the season with a dominating 17-0 victory over Philadelphia in a rematch of last season's NFC championship game, the Bucs (1-1) looked flat. They self-destructed with frequent mistakes, including 17 penalties for 168 yards.

"We all ate some humble pie today," Bucs defensive end Simeon Rice said. "We've got to put everything in front of us, understand what it is. It's just one game."

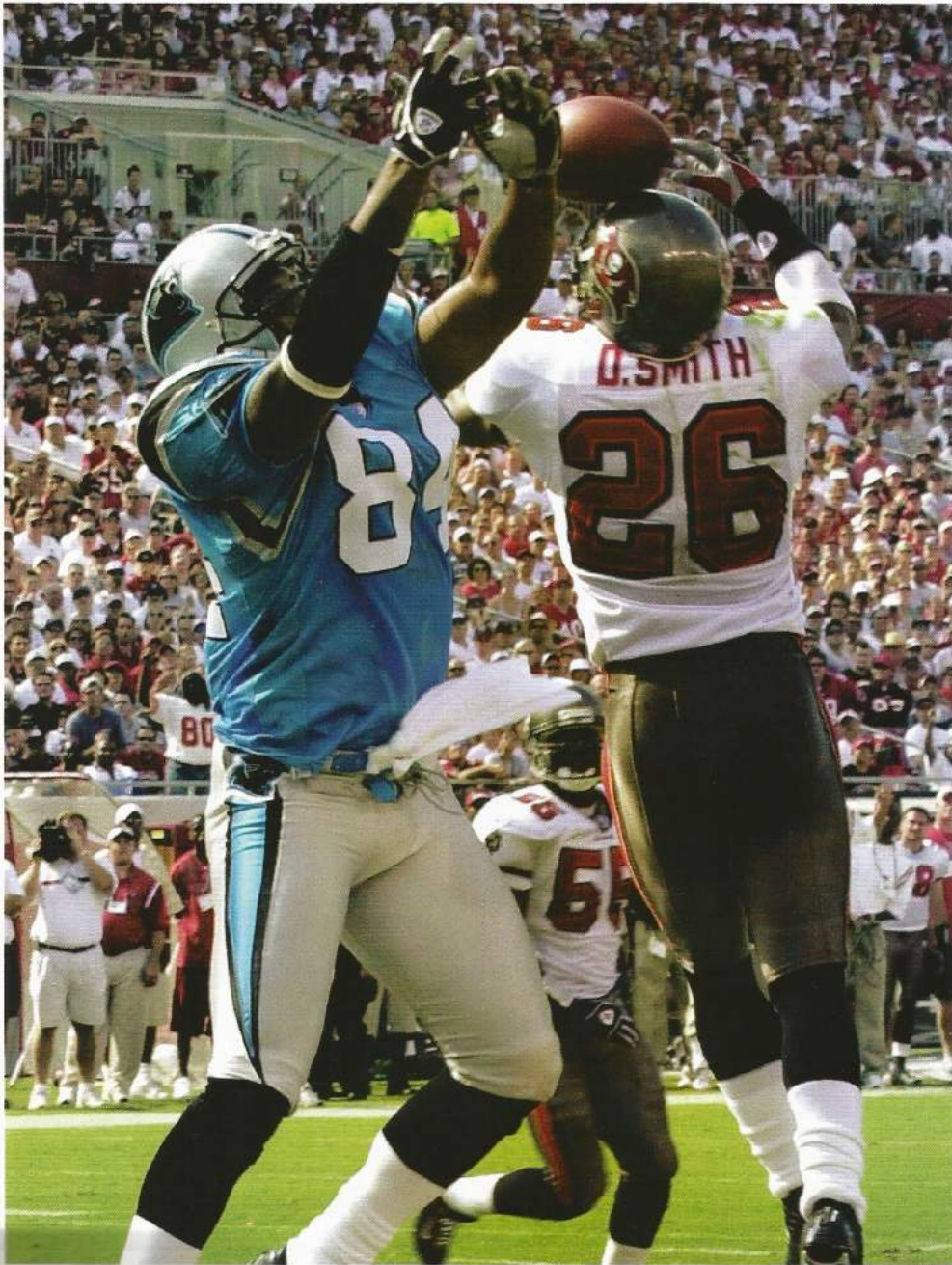
Trailing 9-3, the Bucs drove 82 yards in 10 plays to tie it on Brad Johnson's 6-yard pass to McCardell, who got both feet in bounds before falling out of the end zone.

The Panthers, who overcame a 17-point second-half deficit to win their opener, this time overcame 16 penalties for 120 yards. After Smith's punt return up the right sideline, Davis ran for 10 yards to the Tampa Bay 30.

Four plays later, Kasay kicked his game-winner.



**Tampa Bay receiver Keyshawn Johnson (19) gets leveled by Panthers safety Deon Grant after a first-quarter reception.**



Jake Delhomme, who came off the bench to lead Carolina's comeback against the Jaguars, was 9-of-23 for 96 yards in his third pro start. He was sacked twice and threw two interceptions, including Brian Kelly's pick that set up Gramatica's 41-yarder late in the third quarter.

Tampa Bay opened with a dominating performance against Philadelphia. It began the day with a chance to become the first team in more than 25 years to shut out three consecutive regular-season opponents.

Kasay's first field goal ended a stretch of 11 straight scoreless quarters for the Bucs' defense. Al Wallace returned an interception 53 yards to set up another field goal for a 6-0 halftime lead.

The Bucs outgained the Panthers 190-107 up to that point. But the defending champions hurt themselves with five costly penalties.

The sloppy play continued in the second half, with Tampa Bay being penalized seven times for 70 yards in the third quarter.

Johnson completed 34 of a career-high 61 passes for 339 yards. He was sacked once and threw one interception. Keyshawn Johnson led the Bucs with nine receptions for 102 yards, but dropped a leaping try in the end zone with 19 seconds left in regulation.

Brad Johnson found McCardell for the game-tying TD two plays later.

"Last year, we were 1-1 at this point and went to the Super Bowl," Keyshawn Johnson said. "There's no panic setting in for us. We just have to evaluate where we are at and what we did that was wrong out there and try to make the corrections."

**Bucs safety Dwight Smith (26) breaks up a first-quarter pass intended for Carolina's Jermaine Wiggins.**

SEPTEMBER 14, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Tampa Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>9</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 2:55, John Kasay kicks 28-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**CAR** 0:19, John Kasay kicks 36-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 10:45, John Kasay kicks 20-yard field goal

**TB** 2:12, Martin Gramatica kicks 41-yard field goal

#### 4th Quarter

**TB** 0:05, Brad Johnson passes to Keenan McCardell down the middle for 6-yard TD (Martin Gramatica kick failed)

#### Overtime

**CAR** 3:34, John Kasay kicks 46-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	<b>CAR</b>	<b>TB</b>
First Downs	14	25
Rushes-Yards	40-171	22-60
Passing Yards	87	337
Comp-Att-Int	9-23-2	34-61-1
Punts-Avg.	7-47.9	7-47.4
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards	16-120	17-168
Time of Possession	35:01	36:31

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme — 23-9-96-0. Tampa Bay: Johnson — 61-34-339-1.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 33-142, Foster 3-20, Smart 2-5, Delhomme 1-2, Hoover 1-2. Tampa Bay: Pittman 10-38, Alstott 4-9, Jones 4-8, Stecker 3-6, Johnson 1(-1).

**Receiving** — Carolina: Muhammad 4-61, Smith 3-27, Proehl 1-8, Mangum 1-0. Tampa Bay: Johnson 9-102, Pittman 6-43, McCardell 5-53, Jurevicius 4-31, Dilger 3-30, Alstott 3-22, Stecker 2-7, Williams 1-43, Yoder 1-8.

**Attendance** — 65,621

# Panthers Rout Atlanta to Reach 3-0

**R**ap music blasted from the showers and the Carolina Panthers danced their way through the locker room. There was no shame in celebrating a 3-0 start to the season.

Especially not after a 23-3 victory today over Atlanta to snap Carolina's six-game losing streak to the Falcons.

"This was real gratifying after six straight losses and them owning us," defensive end Brentson Buckner said. "Now we know we can beat them."

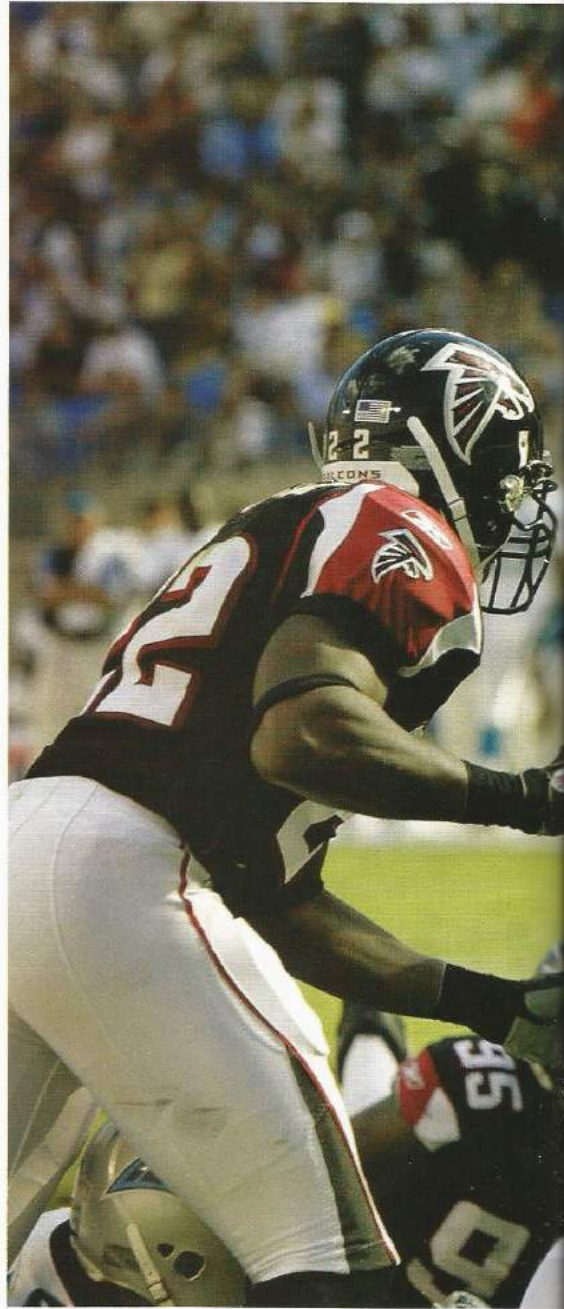
But Buckner was quick to caution his teammates not to celebrate too much — after all, Carolina started 3-0 last season only to go on an eight-game skid.

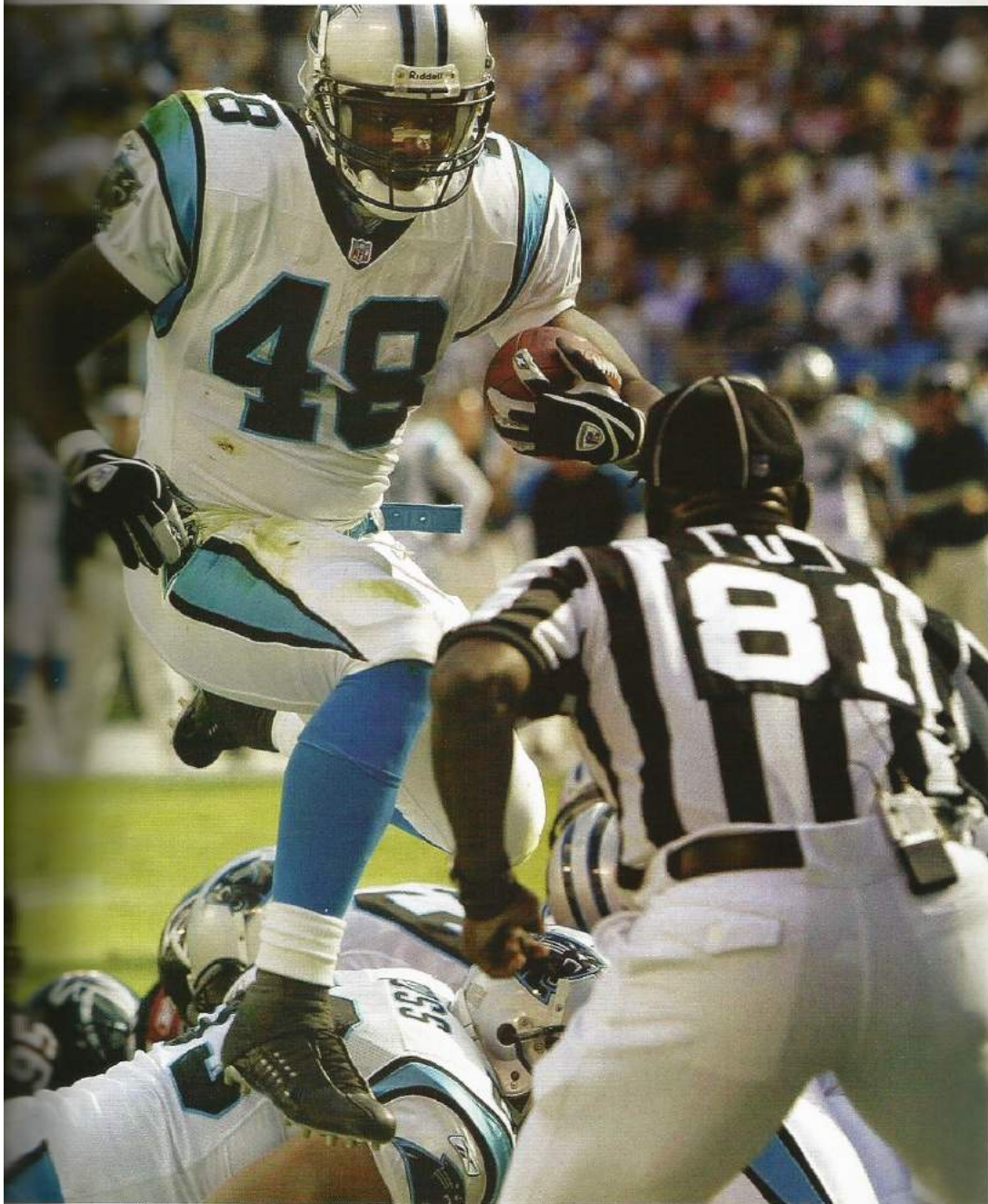
That's not likely to happen this year, not after a confidence-building win over Atlanta (1-3).

The Falcons have been the Panthers' No. 1 nemesis, coming into the game as winners of nine of the last 10 matchups that included two humiliating losses last year by a combined score of 71-0.

"Buckner, our captain, told us we were at the same spot last year at 3-0 and you all know what happened to us after that," said safety Deon Grant, who had a career-high 12 tackles. "So we're celebrating now, but not for long. We've got to get back to work and back to focusing on the rest of the season."

**Panthers halfback Stephen Davis (48) hurdles over the goal line for a 1-yard TD in the first quarter.**



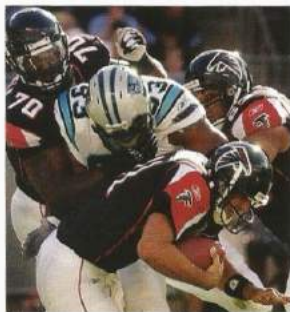


Stephen Davis ran for 153 yards and his first touchdown of the season to become the first back in franchise history to open the season with three consecutive 100-yard games.

"We knew they were going to run the ball — I told everyone on the team that he was the best back I had seen on film this year," Atlanta linebacker Keith Brooking said. "They pounded us."

Davis, written off in Washington last season, now has 406 yards rushing in three games and has turned into the workhorse the Panthers had hoped for. He could have gone after Carolina's single-game franchise record of 168 yards, but sat most of the fourth quarter after just 21 carries.

"I had a lot more in me," Davis said with a sly grin. "But I had a little headache, I just didn't want to tell you guys."



Quarterback Doug Johnson (11) gets sacked by Carolina's Michael Rucker (93) as Falcons players Bob Whitfield (70) and Roberto Garza (63) close in during the second quarter.

Davis reeled off a 29-yard run on Carolina's second possession to set up the Panthers' first rushing touchdown of the season. He scored on a 1-yard run eight plays later to put Carolina up 7-0.

He never showed any signs of slowing down, adding a 34-yard run late in the third on one of his final carries.

"You run the football like that and it opens up everything else," said Atlanta coach Dan Reeves, still stuck one game short of 200 victories. "It makes it very difficult and keeps the other teams defense off the field with those long drives."

Jake Delhomme had his best game as a starter with 168 yards passing and a 5-yard touchdown pass to Ricky Proehl, and John Kasay kicked field goals of 53, 23 and 38 yards as the Panthers handed Atlanta its third-consecutive loss.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | SEPTEMBER 28, 2003

<b>Atlanta</b>	0	0	0	3	—	3
<b>Carolina</b>	7	10	0	6	—	23

**Scoring Summary**

**1st Quarter**

**CAR** 3:30, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**2nd Quarter**

**CAR** 5:40, Jake Delhomme passes to Ricky Proehl down the middle for 5-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**CAR** 0:26, John Kasay kicks 53-yard field goal

**4th Quarter**

**CAR** 15:00, John Kasay kicks 23-yard field goal

**ATL** 3:50, Jay Feely kicks 28-yard field goal

**CAR** 3:12, John Kasay kicks a 38-yard field goal

**Team Stats**

	ATL	CAR
First Downs	11	19
Rushes-Yards	23-144	39-193
Passing Yards	123	168
Comp-Att-Int	14-23-1	17-27-0
Punts-Avg.	6-41.5	4-47.8
Fumbles	1-0	3-1
Penalties	9-84	4-40
Time of Possession	27:23	32:37

**Individual Stats**

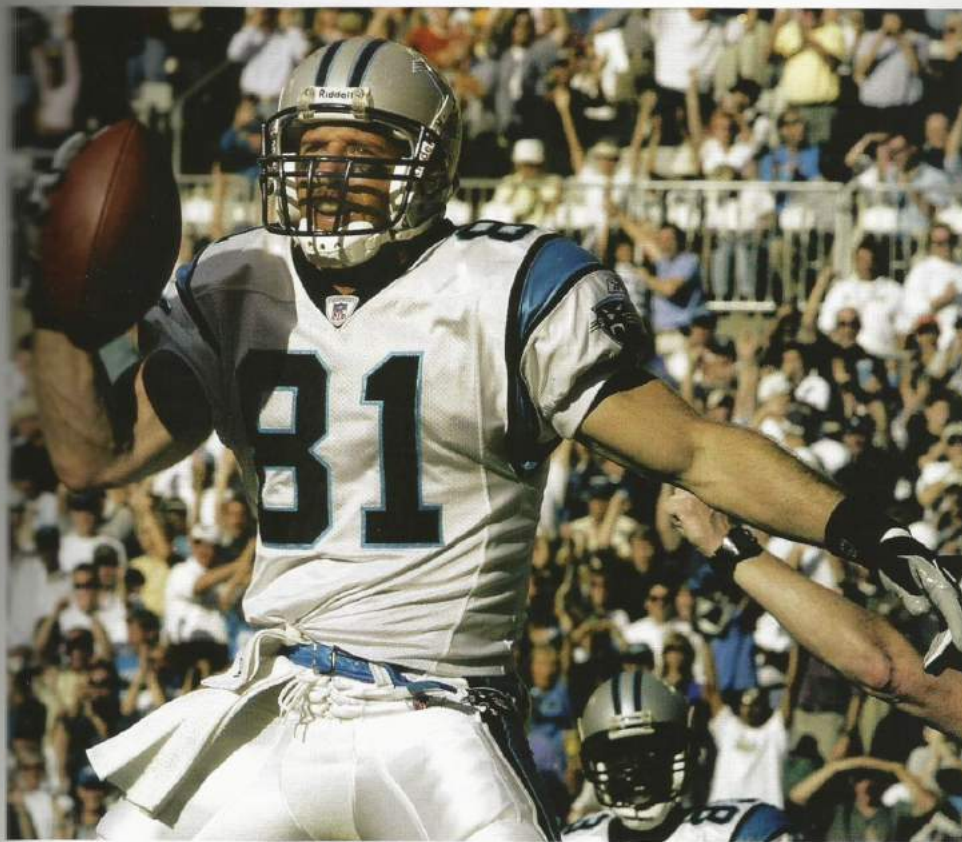
**Passing** — Atlanta: Johnson 23-14-152-0. Carolina: Delhomme 27-17-168-1.

**Rushing** — Atlanta: Duckett 14-100, Dunn 4-20, Dantzler 3-12, Griffith 2-12. Carolina: Davis 21-153, Foster 10-46, Smith 2-(-1), 1-(-2), 5-(-3).

**Receiving** - Atlanta: Price 5-30, Crumpler 3-76, McCord 2-10, Duckett 1-21, Kozlowski 1-8, Farris 1-4, Dunn 1-3. Carolina: Smith 5-47, Davis 4-38, Wiggins 2-42, Muhammad 2-27, Proehl 2-10, Foster 2-4.

**Attendance** — 72,765





Ricky Proehl celebrates his 5-yard TD catch in the second quarter.

The Falcons started last season 1-3 as well, only to rally to a 9-6-1 finish. But they did that last year with star quarterback Michael Vick, who has yet to play this season because of a broken leg.

The prospect of having to mount a similar comeback was frustrating to the Falcons.

"I get tired of working hard during the week and it not happening on the weekend," cornerback Ray Buchanan said. "We're 1-3 and it didn't feel good last year and it doesn't feel good now."

The Panthers had no problem stopping backup quarterback Doug Johnson, who struggled to move the Falcons and managing just 267 yards total offense. He completed 14 of 23 passes for 152 yards and was inter-

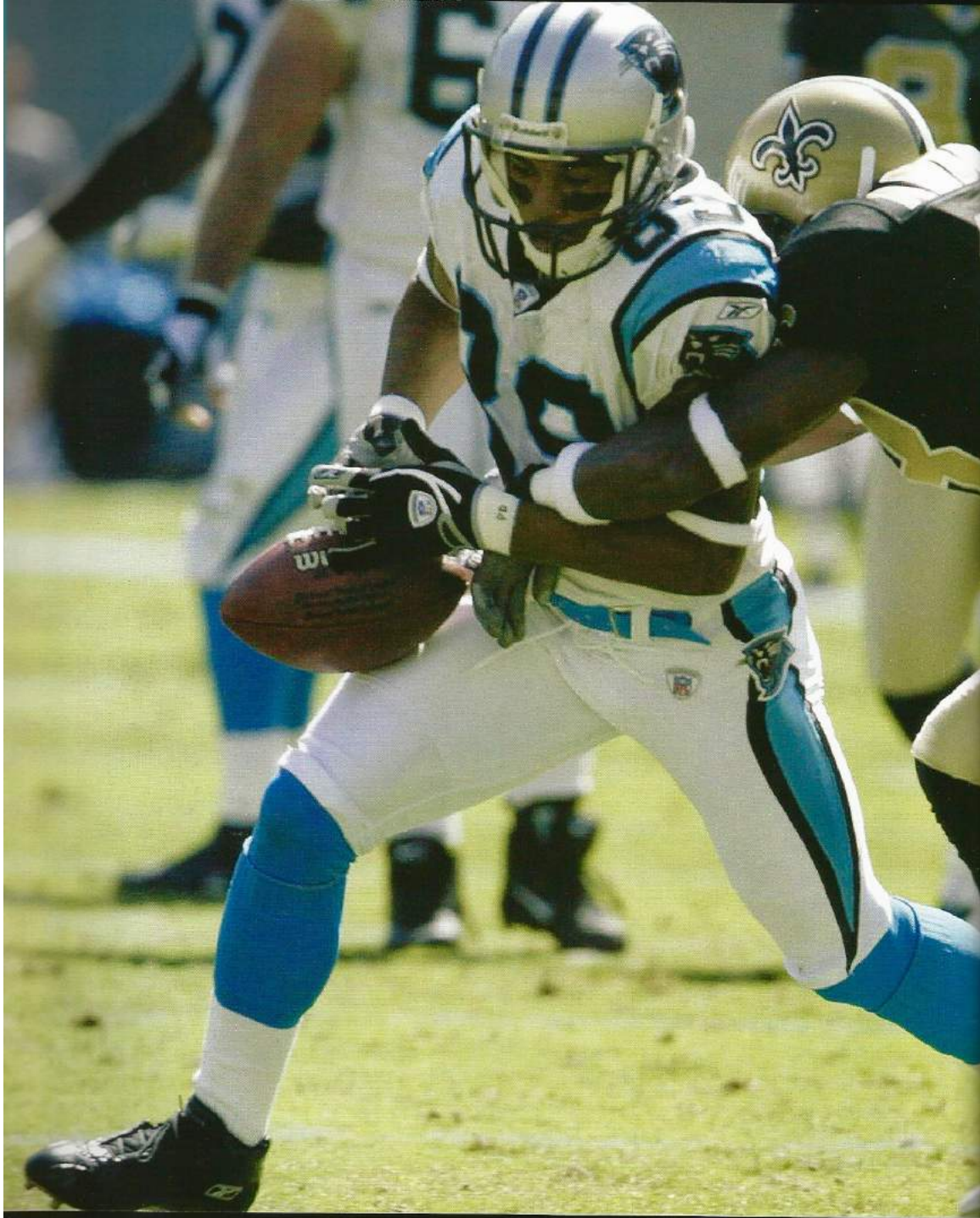
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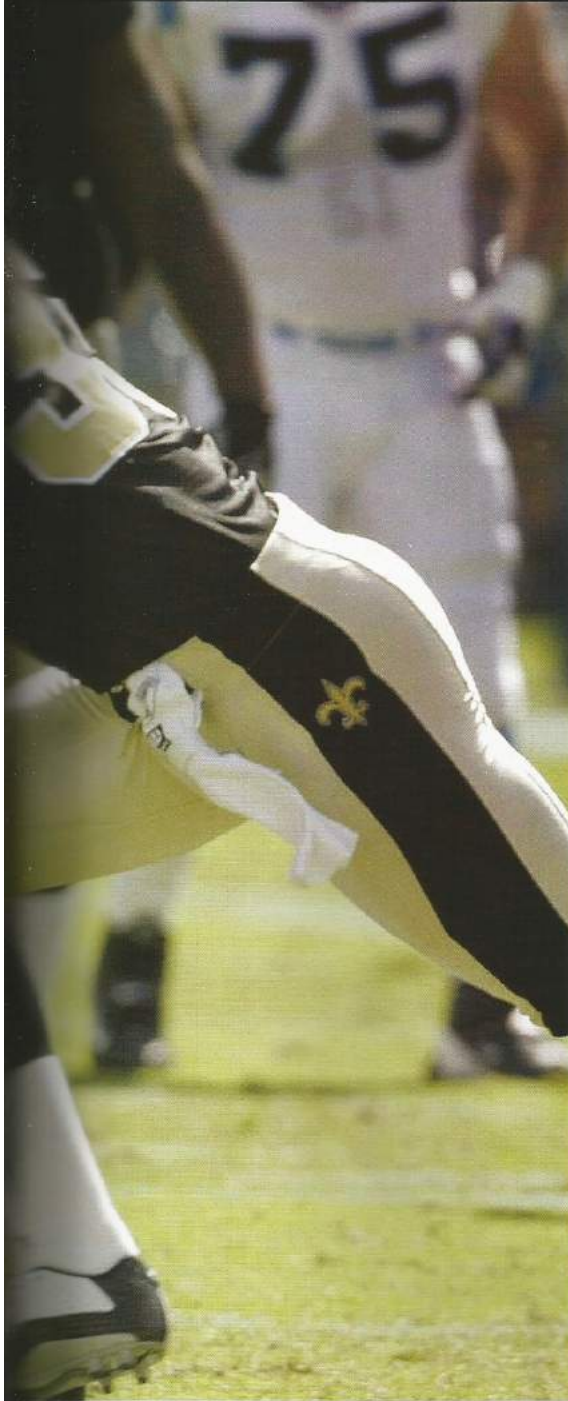
His 63-yard pass to Alge Crumpler late in the fourth quarter generated Atlanta's only score — a 28-yard field goal by Jay Feely to cut it to 20-3 with 3:46 to play.

The only other time the Falcons were in scoring range was in the third quarter when Kemp Rasmussen tipped Feely's 55-yard field goal attempt for Carolina's six blocked kick of the season.

T.J. Duckett helped Atlanta move the ball on the ground, running for 100 of the Falcons' 144 yards rushing, but Duckett gained 41 on an early carry that failed to generate any points.

— *By The Associated Press*





# Davis Returns, Leads Panthers to Best Start

**S**tephen Davis was fighting cramps alone in the locker room, determined to get back on the field and finish the best start in Carolina Panthers' history.

Davis made it back out after taking intravenous fluids to run for a final 10 yards that sealed the Panthers' 19-13 victory over the New Orleans Saints today, moving Carolina to 4-0 for the first time.

"My goal was just to come back and finish," Davis said. "When I got out there, I didn't say anything in the huddle. They told me, 'Let's get it.'"

Davis, who finished with 159 yards and a 1-yard touchdown run, headed to the locker room with the Panthers leading 19-10 late in the fourth quarter.

The Saints (1-4) cut it to 19-13 on John Carney's 26-yard field goal with 1:43 to play, and Carolina needed one last first down to close the win.

The Panthers knew it was time for Davis.

"We needed a first down, so I looked at Stephen and told him to 'Go get it, let's finish it here,'" quarterback Jake Delhomme said.

Davis gained the final 10 yards on three straight runs. When he gained the first down on his 30th carry of the

**Steve Smith (89) drops a pass as he is hit by Saints defender Ashley Ambrose during the first quarter.**

game — allowing Delhomme to take a knee on the final two plays — Delhomme excitedly pounded on his teammates' helmets to celebrate the win.

"Stephen Davis is the best thing that has ever happened to this football team," safety Mike Minter said. "Never before have we had a running back who could just grind the game out for us and it's a pleasure watching him seal it for us from the sidelines."

There's little flash or fanfare to this team, just a steady dose of Davis in every game.

Signed during the offseason, Davis set an NFL record as the first back to pass the 100-yard mark in his first four games with a new team. With 565 yards rushing this season, he also set a record for the most total yards with a new team, besting Ricky Williams' 460 yards in four games with Miami last season.

Rod Smart — aka "He Hate Me" — had the flashiest play for the Panthers, returning a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown. John Kasay added field goals of 49 and 23 yards.

It was a confidence-building game for the Panthers, who opened last season 3-0 before going on an eight-game losing streak. It was a stat second-year coach John Fox reminded them off all week in emphasizing how important it was to beat New Orleans.

Fox was still cautious after the game.

"It is what it is," he said. "It's still the end of the first quarter ... and we are in a four quarter race."

The injury-riddled Saints, down six starters on defense, lost their third consecutive game but showed marked improvement from last week's 55-21 embarrassing loss to the Indianapolis Colts.

The Saints had 344 yards total offense — 155 on the ground against a Carolina team that prides itself in stopping the run.

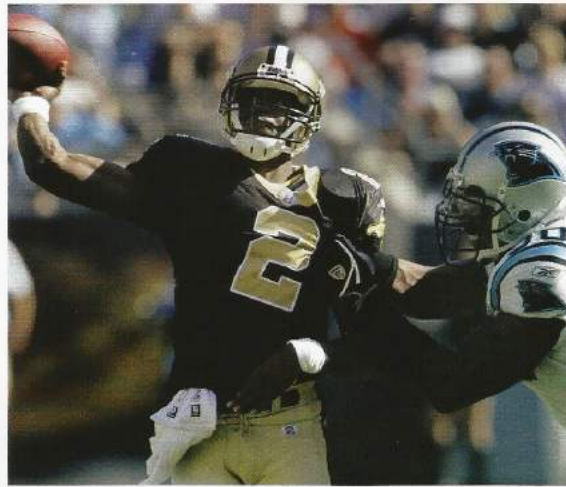
"These guys are not going to give up," coach Jim Haslett said. "I was proud of the effort they gave all week in practice. The extra time they put in, the film work. Everything they did, they stuck tight with it."

Deuce McAllister, who had a stiff back and a slight touch of the flu, ran for 124 yards for the Saints. He also added four catches for 59 yards.

"This is my job and those are my teammates, those are my brothers," McAllister said. "I told them whatever I got, that's what I'm going to give to them."

New Orleans never led, but was still fighting at the end.

Carney's second field goal pulled them within a touchdown late in the game, and the Saints then tried to recover an onside kick. But Carney's kick went out of bounds and the Panthers simply had to hand the ball off to Davis to run



Saints quarterback Aaron Brooks throws a pass under pressure from Carolina's Julius Peppers (90) in the fourth quarter.

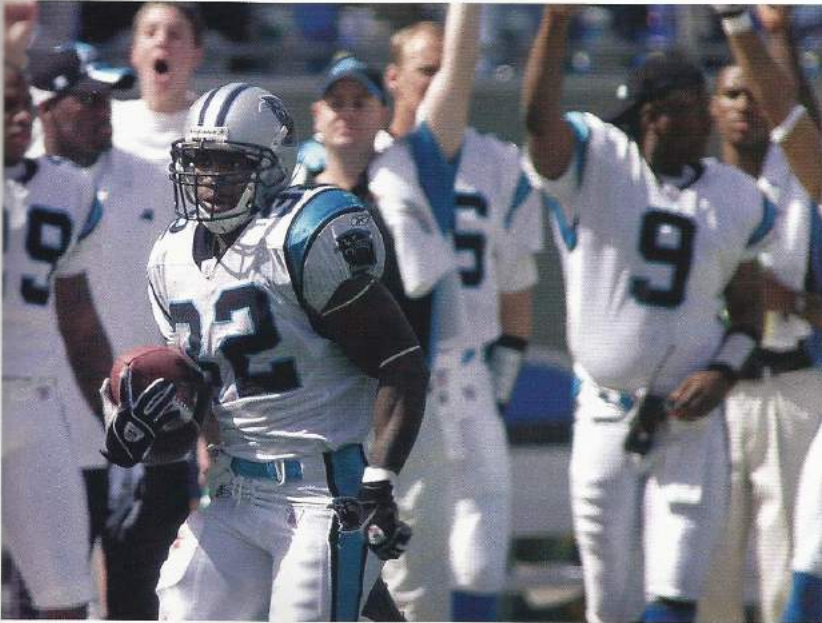
out the clock.

Delhomme, a Louisiana native who spent five seasons as the backup in New Orleans before signing with the Panthers in the offseason, finished 15-of-23 for 124 yards.

He said he woke up at 6:05 a.m., too excited about facing his former team to fall back to sleep.

"I was fine all week, then when I woke up and looked at the alarm clock I thought, 'You've got to be kidding me,'" he said. "I was ready to play. I had to calm myself down a little bit."

— By The Associated Press



Carolina's Rod Smart (32) scampers past cheering teammates for a 100-yard kick return for a touchdown in the second quarter.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | OCTOBER 3, 2003

<b>New Orleans</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>19</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 6:37, John Kasay kicks 49-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**NO** 13:45, John Carney kicks 38-yard field goal

**CAR** 13:33, Rod Smart 100-yard kick return for TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 12:20, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (2-point attempt failed, Todd Sauerbrun pass to Al Wallace)

**NO** 6:43, Aaron Brooks passes to Joe Horn to the left for 21-yard TD (John Carney kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 13:03, John Kasay kicks 23-yard field goal

**NO** 1:47, John Carney kicks 26-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	NO	CAR
First Downs	17	21
Rushes-Yards	29-155	40-185
Passing Yards	189	124
Comp-Att-Int	16-31-1	15-23-0
Punts-Avg.	4-41.0	3-45.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-1
Penalties	7-64	4-20
Time of Possession	26:58	33:02

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — New Orleans: Brooks 31-16-189-1. Carolina: Delhomme 23-15-124-0.

**Rushing** — New Orleans: McAllister 23-124, Brooks 4-23, Carter 2-8. Carolina: Davis 30-159, Foster 7-25, Hoover 1-3, Delhomme 2-(-2).

**Receiving** — New Orleans: McAllister 4-59, Horn 4-56, Conwell 4-44, Stallworth 1-15, Williams 1-7, Pathon 1-7, Smith 1-1. Carolina: Muhammad 5-42, Proehl 4-22, Seidman 2-24, Mangum 1-16, Smith 1-13, Hoover 1-4, Davis 1-3.

**Attendance** — 72,496

# Life Is Tough, and That Is the Way the Panthers' Fox Likes It

BY THOMAS GEORGE  
*The New York Times*  
 Published: January 25, 2004

**C**HARLOTTE, N.C. — Though his father, Ron, was a Navy Seal, Carolina Coach John Fox said his mother, Kaye, might have been tougher. Kaye earned a master's degree in business from William and Mary in the 1960's when few women did. Kaye was the law. Kaye ruled.

His mother is the origin of Fox's toughness, his aggressiveness. Those traits, as well as his volcanolike enthusiasm and rare instincts for football and people, helped him take a team that was 1-15 two seasons ago to Super Bowl XXXVIII against New England on Feb. 1 in Houston. As Fox remembered his mother while in a Panthers meeting room here on Thursday, he also remembered the strength he needed when, soon before she died of cancer in 1986, she told him the unbelievable.

"Basically, she says: 'Your dad is not your real dad,' " Fox said. "Here is your real dad in this photograph. Here is his phone number. You do what you think is right."

Just like that.

Fox, who will turn 49 a week after the Super Bowl, was stunned. He was 30 then, with a family of his own. He called his biological father. It turned out he had another son whose birthday was the same day as Fox's. Father and son met soon afterward. "I sure look like him," Fox thought. Then they did not talk again until two months ago, when his biological father called.

"You take a situation like that, I mean out of the blue, that calls for some toughness," Fox said. "But I figured the father who had provided for me, Ron Fox, my dad who now lives in Fullbrook, Calif., is my dad. Something like that toughens you up even more. You never know what's around the corner."

Terry Lathrum, one of Fox's boyhood friends from Virginia Beach who now lives in San Diego, revealed another

side of Kaye Fox's relationship with her oldest son.

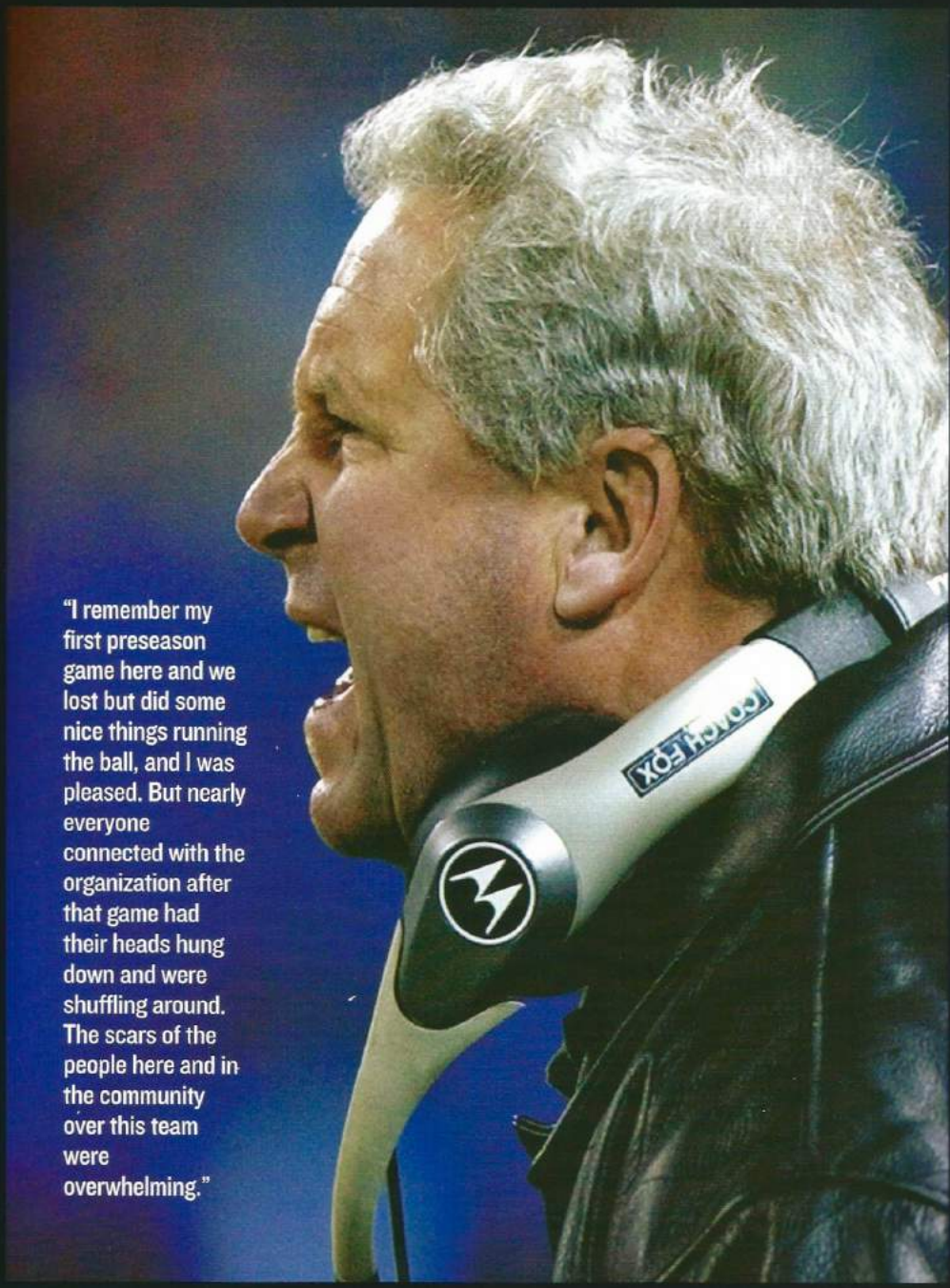
"I had been a running back on our little league team and John came and became the running back and kept scoring touchdowns," Lathrum said. "He was getting close to breaking the touchdown record that me and another teammate shared. So, whenever he started to break a long run and was heading to the end zone, we started clipping on purpose to make sure it would be called back. And his mother caught on, grabbed us by the back of our jerseys and said, 'Boys, this stops today!' We said, 'Yes, ma'm.' It stopped."

All things considered, it was little wonder that John Fox rolled into Carolina last season and did not blink even though he found not only a team that had lost 15 straight games under Coach George Seifert but also a franchise near shambles from off-field troubles, most notably the former receiver Rae Carruth's imprisonment after being convicted of conspiracy in the murder of his pregnant girlfriend.

Growing up in Virginia Beach until age 15, then moving near San Diego, Fox was a swimmer and a surfer and worked on a boat hooking bait for fishermen. All he had to do with the Panthers, he believed, was reel them into his world of enthusiasm and hard work. Fox knew plenty about both after coaching defenses at eight colleges and in the United States Football League before he gained his first N.F.L. job as Pittsburgh's secondary coach in 1989.

"I remember my first preseason game here and we lost but did some nice things running the ball, and I was pleased," Fox said. "But nearly everyone connected with the organization after that game had their heads hung down and were shuffling around. The scars of the people here and in the community over this team were overwhelming."

Fox told the Panthers he did not question their athletic ability, but he questioned their toughness. He asked them how they could have lost 15 consecutive games and not look at themselves as the reason. He



"I remember my first preseason game here and we lost but did some nice things running the ball, and I was pleased. But nearly everyone connected with the organization after that game had their heads hung down and were shuffling around. The scars of the people here and in the community over this team were overwhelming."

tore the Panthers down even further psychologically before building them up.

Fox told them he would make them tough, smart and the league's best-conditioned team. He told them they would build an offense that ran the ball to win and a defense that dominated. Last season, the Panthers responded with a 7-9 record, the second-best improvement by an N.F.L. team with a rookie coach since 1978. Their defense rose to 2nd from 31st, the best one-season improvement in league history.

This season, the defense ranked eighth as Carolina improved to 11-5 and toppled defending Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay to claim the National Football Conference South. In the playoffs, the Panthers beat Dallas at home, then won games at St. Louis and at Philadelphia to become the conference champions.

Fox's routine is familiar, said Washington linebacker Jessie Armstead, who played five seasons under Fox with the Giants. Fox was the Giants' defensive coordinator from 1997 until he became the Panthers' coach.

"John came into our first meeting and told us, 'You think you're a good defense; you're not a good defense,' " Armstead said in a telephone interview from Dallas. "The players started looking at each other wondering, 'Who is this guy?' I thought, 'This guy here, he's going to last; he's tough.' He won us over. He turned us into a dominating defense in the league. John brings attitude to the table. He understands the game, and his players understand the game.

"He would tell you during a game that on the next play the ball is going to a back in the flat. You line up and the formation looks nothing like that's going to happen, and you think he's dead wrong. And sure enough, the ball goes to the back in the flat. So you learn quickly with him: if he says go to the flat, you run to the flat. He's a captain now, not just a passenger. I'm not surprised at all that he's a head coach in the Super Bowl. I knew he'd make it."

Fox showed his toughness as a walk-on at San Diego State, where he and Herman Edwards, now the Jets' coach, starred in the defensive backfield.

Over the years, Fox studied John Wooden's pyramid of success. He was also influenced by the football coaches he worked under. At United States International University in 1979, Fox met Sid Gillman, whom he called "the most innovative coach who ever lived."

With the Steelers from 1989 to 1991, he learned from Chuck Noll the importance of fundamentals. With the San Diego Chargers in 1992-93, Fox was reminded of the importance of family by Bobby Ross. And exposure to the defensive guru Rod Rust taught him "as much about football as anyone."

"Coach Fox preaches mental toughness," Panthers linebacker Brian Allen said. "We learned he is going to be who he is, how he is and what he is - and it's working."

Carolina General Manager Marty Hurney said: "John has a great feel for the game of football, for the current N.F.L. system, for players and for how to reach players. It's all natural. People connect with him. We had a lot of anxiety looking for a head coach; when John left here after two days of interviewing, we had relief. He fit us."

In part because of his keen insight into others. And into himself.

A critical time during this season came after the Panthers' 8-2 start. They lost successive games to Dallas, Philadelphia and Atlanta. After the loss to the Falcons, Fox said that Panthers receiver Muhsin Muhammad had run an incorrect route. A reporter wrote that Fox said Muhammad had cost them the game. Muhammad did not like it. Neither did his teammates.

"He told us to trust him," safety Mike Minter said of the incident. "Now what?"

Fox met with Muhammad and apologized. He then met with the team and explained the context of his remarks and apologized to them, too.

"I've got a lot of respect for John," Muhammad said. "He cares about what his guys think about him, what they feel, what they say. Any player is going to work harder for a coach like that. And yet, things still are going to go his way. That makes him as good a politician as he is a coach."

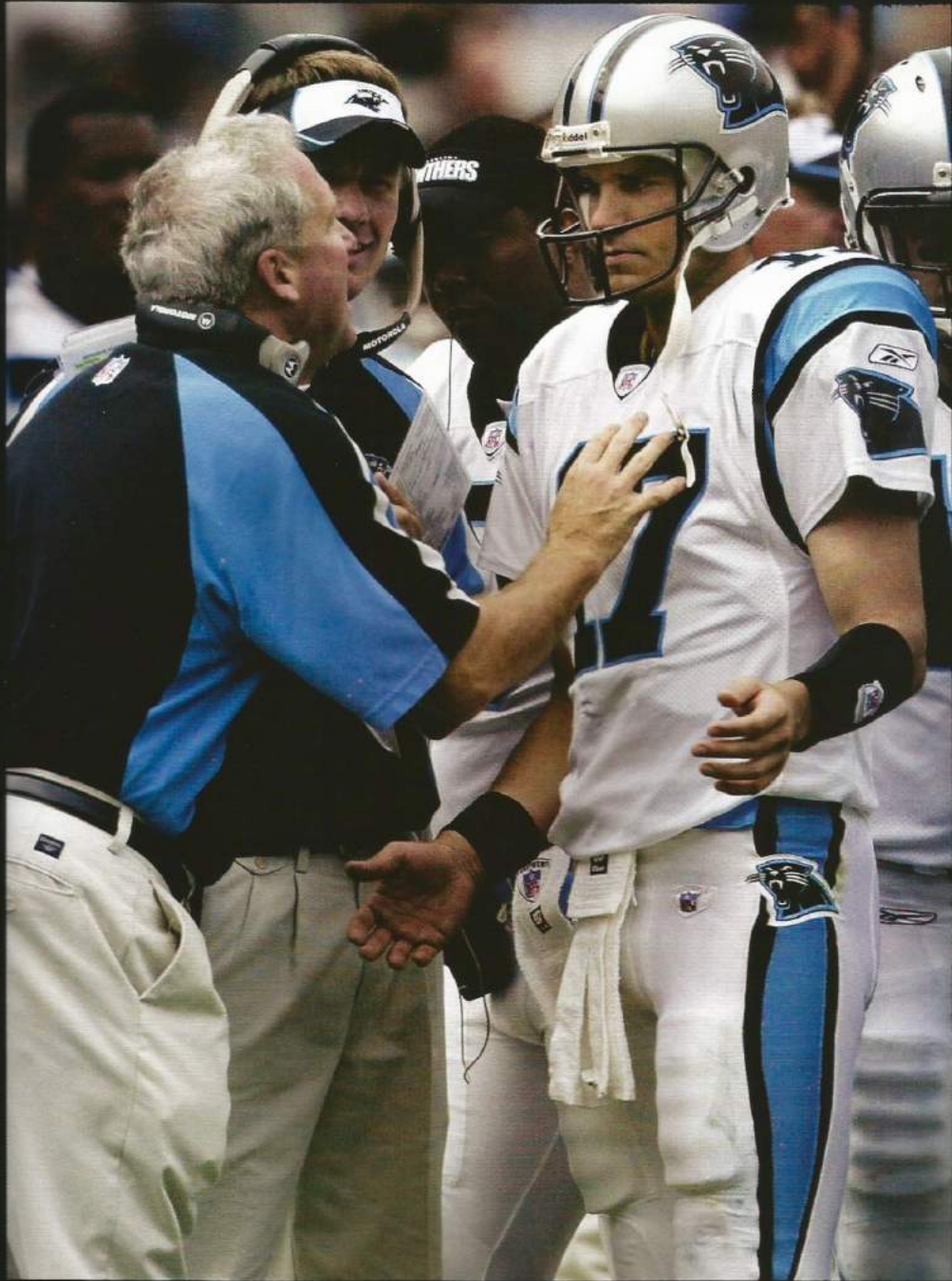
This is not a time for reflection, Fox said. There is a championship to be won and his players understand, he said, that this is going to be a tough, physical Super Bowl against New England.

Just the way Fox likes it.

"The experience, the game, is only fun," he said, "if you win."

**John Fox instructs his quarterback, Jake Delhomme, on the sidelines of Game 1 against Jacksonville.**





# Karsay Boom's OT Kick to Beat Indy

**S**tephen Davis gave the Carolina Panthers a running start today, then DeShaun Foster took over.

The Panthers' tag-team running attack bowled over Indianapolis defenders, broke tackles and eventually set up a 47-yard winning field goal from John Kasay to keep the Panthers unbeaten with a 23-20 overtime win.

"Coach let me know Stephen was down and it was going to be on my shoulders," Foster said. "I just tried to go out there and make the most of my opportunity."

The Panthers (5-0) have now won seven straight dating to last season and are one of three remaining unbeaten teams in the NFL. The others are Kansas City (6-0) and Minnesota (5-0).

But this win was atypical for Carolina.

Just six days after Peyton Manning miraculously rallied the Colts (5-1) from a 21-point deficit in the final four minutes at Tampa Bay, he nearly did it again.

Manning led the Colts on an improbable 91-yard, game-tying drive in the final three minutes against another one of the NFL's best defenses — but he never got a chance to win it.

To compound the Panthers' problems, Davis, the NFC's leading rusher, watched most of the final 21 minutes with a bruised arm. He finished with 76 yards

**John Kasay (4) kicks the game-winning, 47-yard field goal to defeat Indianapolis, 23-20, in overtime.**





rushing, his first sub-100-yard game since joining the Panthers and a dramatic drop-off from last week's 159-yard effort.

Davis' absence forced Carolina to use Plan B — making Foster the workhorse.

"If you're going to be a running team like we envision ourselves to be, you have to have that," coach John Fox said of the Panthers' depth at running back.

Foster carried 16 times for 85 yards, his best day as a pro, after missing all of his rookie season with a left knee injury.

For the Colts, it was that kind of day.

After dominating both offensively and defensively in the first half, Indianapolis did little right in the second half.

The offense had just 66 yards in offense before their final drive and turned the ball over twice.

The defense couldn't get off the field and eventually broke down.

Foster and Davis made the Colts pay.

"They have two pretty good running backs, but we didn't stop them, that's all," Colts defensive end Dwight Freeney said.

The Panthers got back into the game after Manning was intercepted and Davis broke four tackles en route to a 28-yard TD run that made it 13-10 early in the third quarter.

On the Panthers' next possession, Nick Harper fell down and Jake Delhomme hooked up with Steve Smith for a 52-yard TD pass to take the lead. Smith had six catches for 103 yards.

Even when it appeared the Colts made a play, like when Chad Bratzke snatched a Delhomme pass out of the air at Carolina 5 early in the fourth quarter, it



Following his winning field goal against the Colts, John Kasay lets Indianapolis fans know who is the No. 1 team in the NFC.

turned out wrong.

Fox challenged the call and won.

"In the replay, I thought that both players grabbed the ball and never had control of it and the ball popped out," referee Larry Nemmers said. "Therefore, it's an incomplete pass."

Colts coach Tony Dungy was puzzled by the change.

"I'm watching the same replay, trying to see what they saw to overturn it," he said. "He said he didn't think Chad Cever had the ball. That's his opinion."

Carolina kept possession and chewed up another five minutes before Manning & Co. got the ball back.

Then Manning was at his best.

He hooked up with four different receivers, including Marvin Harrison who caught

his 700th pass and became the NFL's fastest to that mark Sunday, before spotting Reggie Wayne for a 25-yard TD pass. That tied the score with 45 seconds left in regulation.

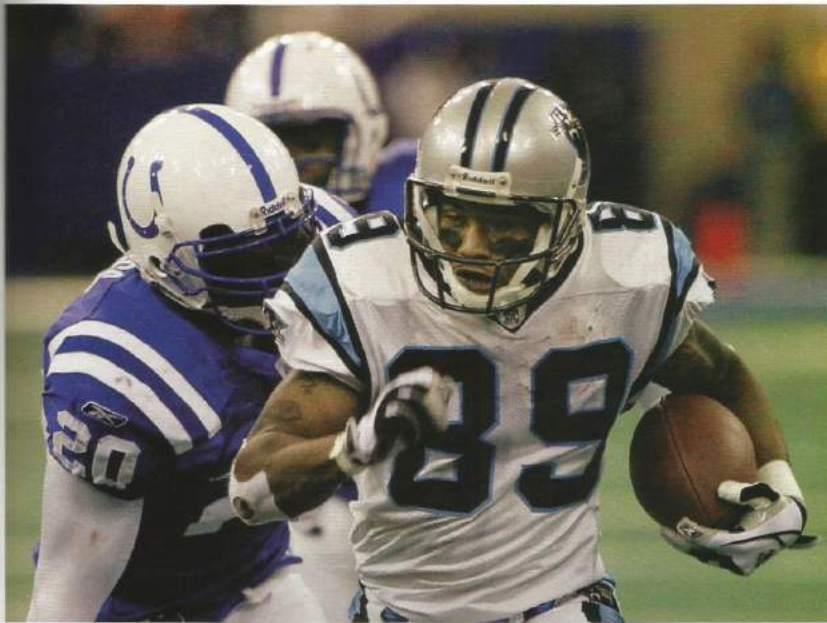
Manning finished 23 of 34 for 293 yards with one touchdown, while Harrison caught eight passes for 119 yards and became the Colts' all-time leader in receiving yards.

But Foster dominated the overtime.

He carried four times for 26 yards, including an 11-yard run on third down and a 12-yard run to get the Panthers in position for the field goal, Kasay's 13th in a row this season.

"The spark was in the second half, getting the turnover and Stephen scoring the touchdown," Delhomme said. "Then we started doing what we do best."

— By The Associated Press



Receiver Steve Smith (89) is chased by Colts safety Mike Doss on a punt return during the fourth quarter.

INDIANAPOLIS | OCTOBER 12, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Indianapolis</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 2:44, John Kasay kicks 29-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**IND** 13:35, James Mungro runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (Mike Vanderjagt kick)

**IND** 8:29, Mike Vanderjagt kicks 39-yard field goal

**IND** 0:19, Mike Vanderjagt kicks 22-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 14:12, Stephen Davis runs to the right for 28-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**CAR** 10:35, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith to the left for 52-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 12:08, John Kasay kicks 23-yard field goal

**IND** 0:50, Peyton Manning passes to Reggie Wayne to the left for 25-yard TD (Mike Vanderjagt kick)

#### Overtime

**CAR** 10:07, John Kasay kicks 47-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	CAR	IND
First Downs	17	20
Rushes-Yards	41-189	27-76
Yards Passing	152	293
Comp-Att-Int	12-20-1	23-34-1
Punts-Avg.	5-48.2	5-43.8
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	2-2
Penalties	9-70	4-30
Time of Possession	37:52	27:47

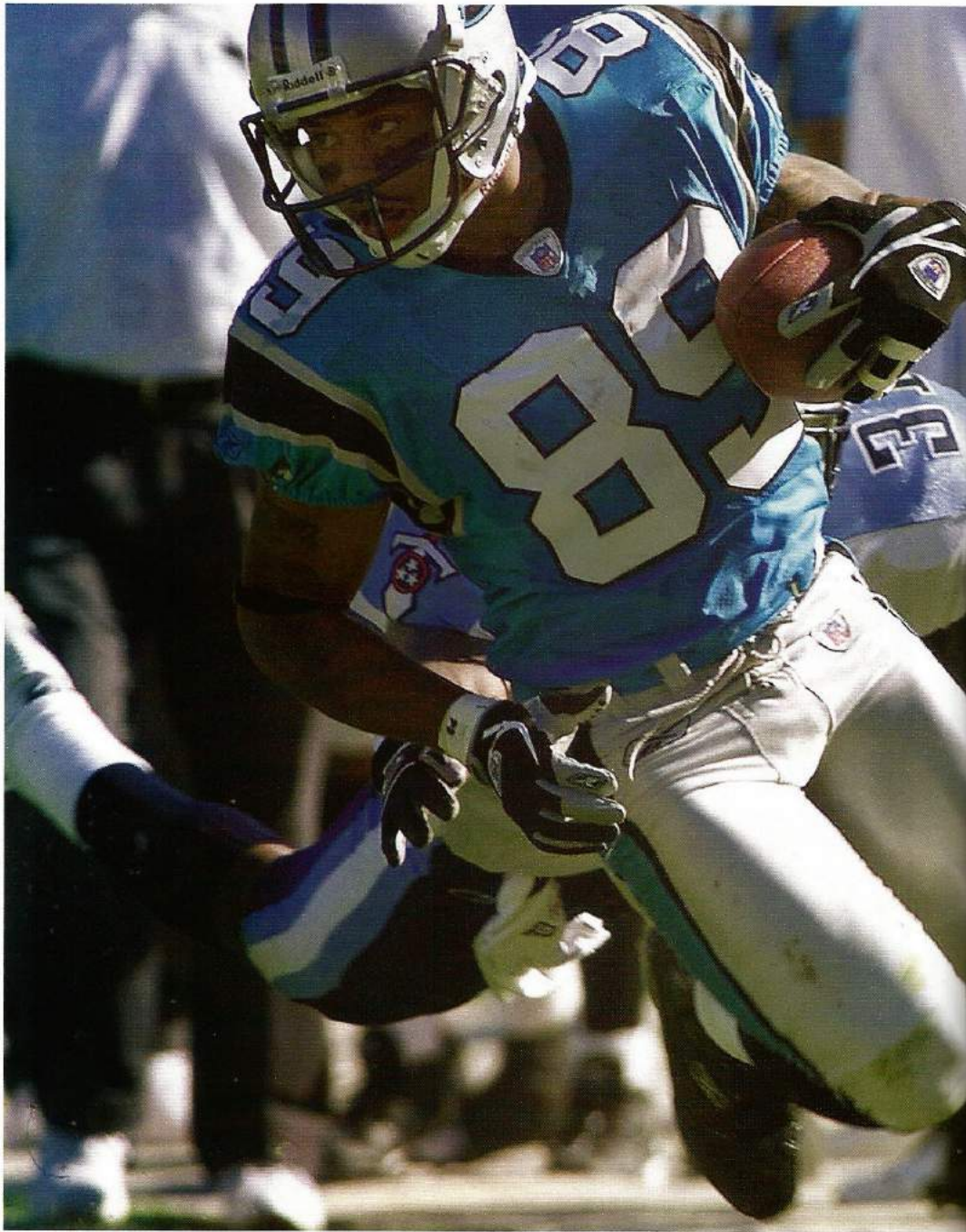
### Individual Stats

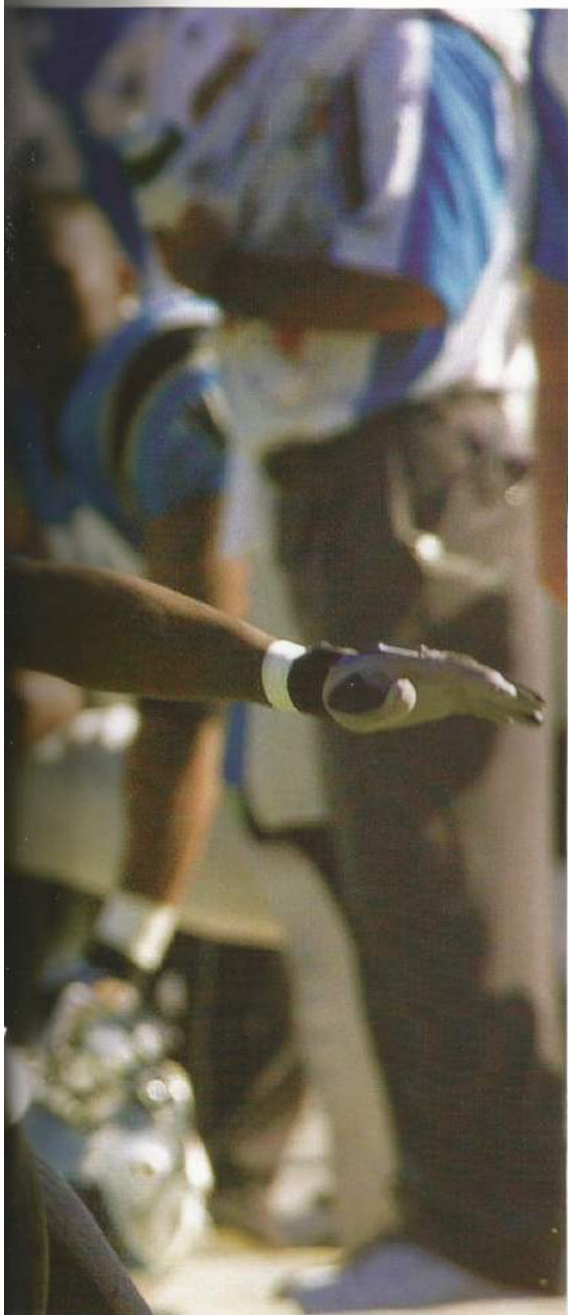
**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 20-12-181-1. Indianapolis: Manning 34-23-293-1.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Foster 16-85, Davis 15-76, Smart 7-17, Smith 1-10, Delhomme 2-1. Indianapolis: Williams 17-57, Mungro 8-10, Manning 1-6, Harrison 1-3.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Smith 6-103, Foster 2-54, Muhammad 2-10, Hoover 1-9, Mangum 1-5. Indianapolis: Harrison 8-119, Wayne 4-71, Walters 3-42, Pollard 3-27, Clark 2-31, Williams 2-7, Mungro 1-(-4).

**Attendance** — 57,082





# Panthers Roar in Rout of Tennessee

**T**he Carolina Panthers hardly expected to go 16-0. They just acted like it. One example: Defensive tackle Kris Jenkins showed up for Sunday's game against Tennessee wearing a jersey from the Miami Dolphins' perfect 1972 season.

The Titans had other ideas, jumping out to a 20-0 lead and converting four fumbles into scores while handing the Panthers their first loss of the season, 37-17 today.

"I had no visions of going undefeated," Carolina coach John Fox said. "But I didn't want to lose a game like that."

The Panthers (5-1) fumbled away the opening kickoff, leading to Steve McNair's rushing touchdown. Then the Titans (5-2) padded their lead to 14-0 and grabbed momentum with a 50-yard pass from Billy Volek to Eddie Berlin on a fake punt.

Keith Bullock later scored on a 35-yard fumble recovery, and Gary Anderson added field goals of 32, 34 and 40 yards for the Titans.

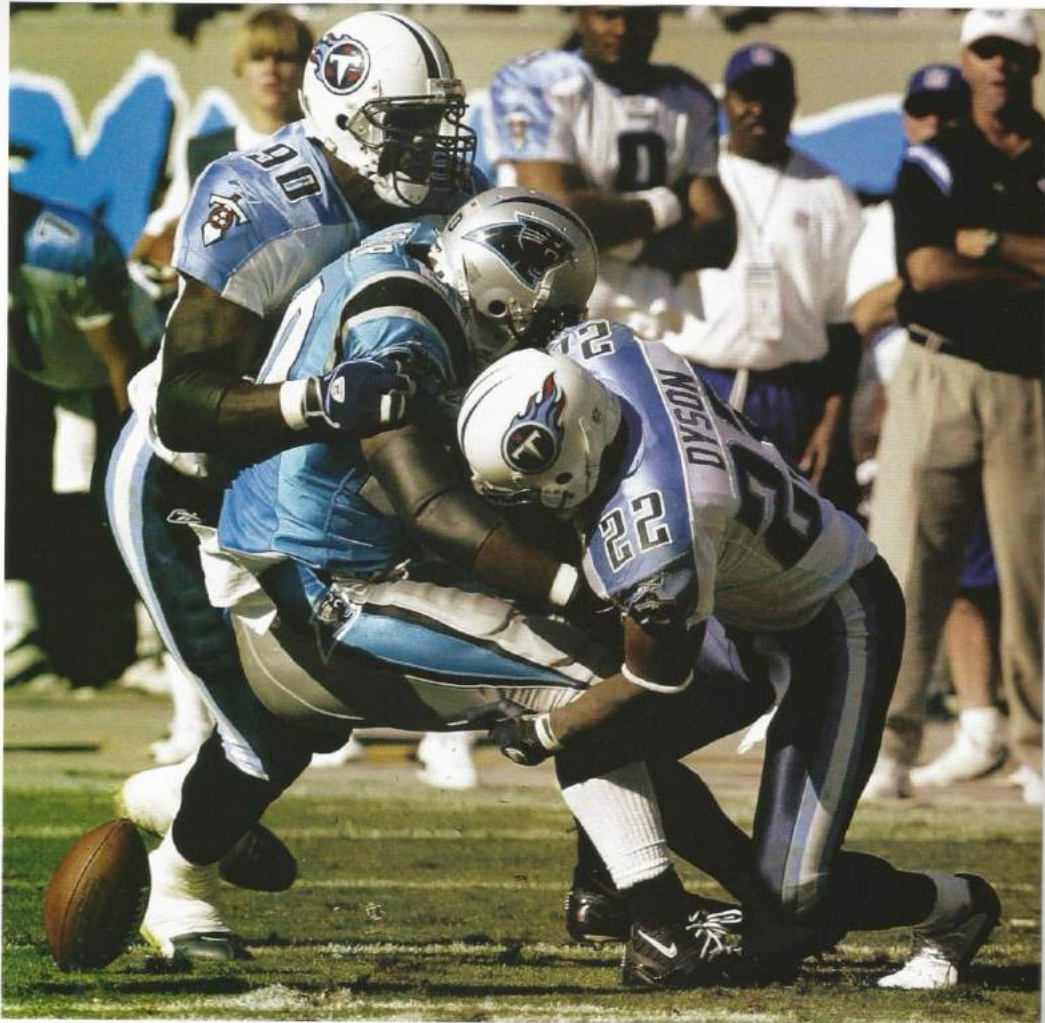
"We wanted to score first and see if they could come from behind," McNair said. "They couldn't."

Not with all of the Panthers' mistakes. They found themselves playing to a chorus of boos before halftime.

And the game exposed many of Carolina's weaknesses.

The Panthers' vaunted defense struggled to stop the

**Steve Smith (89) runs past Tennessee's Lance Schulters en route to a fourth-quarter touchdown.**



**Panthers halfback DeShaun Foster (middle) fumbles the ball after being hit by Tennessee's Jevon Kearse (90) and Andre Dyson (22) in the fourth quarter.**

pass, allowing McNair to go 12-of-22 for 190 yards, including a 22-yard touchdown pass to Drew Bennett. It also had difficulty containing a mobile quarterback: McNair scrambled for 30 yards, with a 7-yard touchdown run in the first quarter.

"He's tough when he's scrambling around. You've got to make him stay in the pocket," safety Mike Minter said. "We couldn't do that and it cost us because he makes too many plays."

Also glaringly evident is that when Carolina's running game doesn't work — and it never did against Tennessee — the Panthers have little to fall back on.

Stephen Davis, who entered the game with 641 yards rushing and four 100-yard games, was held to just 20 yards on 11 carries. Carolina, which came in averaging 172 yards on the ground, finished with 44.

"We wanted to come in and stop their run and make them try to throw the ball," defensive end Jevon Kearse



said. "Then we wanted to knock Jake Delhomme out of the game and get some of (backup) Rodney Peete."

The Titans never knocked Delhomme out, but they forced him to abandon the running game and try to pass the ball. It was next to impossible against Tennessee's stifling defense, which sacked him four times.

Although Delhomme finished with two touchdown passes and a career-high 362 yards, much of it came long after the outcome was decided. His 67-yard touchdown pass to Steve Smith in the fourth quarter made it 30-10.

"We have to be able to run the football," Delhomme said. "We're not a team that wants to throw it."

DeShaun Foster had Carolina's final fumble, which Bullock scooped up and returned for a 37-10 lead with eight minutes left.

It was Tennessee's first victory this season against a team with a winning record. The Titans did it by taking advantage of miscues right from the start.

Carolina's Brad Hoover fumbled away the opening

kickoff, and Tennessee recovered at the Panthers 30. McNair got the Titans rolling with a 21-yard pass to Bennett, then ran the ball in to make it 7-0 a little more than two minutes into the game.

Carolina went three-and-out on its next possession. But at least the Panthers then forced the Titans to punt — or so it seemed. Instead, backup quarterback Volek took the snap and tossed a perfect pass to Berlin, who ran down the sideline for a 14-0 lead after fewer than seven minutes.

The Titans never let up, and when McNair threw a 22-yard TD pass to Bennett 11 seconds before halftime, the score was 27-3, and the home fans were jeering the Panthers.

"We wanted to get up on them right off the bat and have them kind of thinking what hit them," Bennett said. "And then we just kept piling on in the first half. They always talk about Carolina being a second-half team, but we came out already out of reach."

— *By The Associated Press*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | OCTOBER 19, 2003

<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>17</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**TEN** 12:57, Steve McNair runs to the left for 7-yard TD (Gary Anderson kick)

**TEN** 9:00, Billy Volek passes to Eddie Berlin to the right for 50-yard TD (Gary Anderson kick)

**TEN** 5:09, Gary Anderson kicks 40-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**TEN** 12:48, Gary Anderson kicks 32-yard field goal

**CAR** 2:24, John Kasay kicks 53-yard field goal

**TEN** 0:22, Steve McNair passes to Drew Bennett to the left for 22-yard TD (Gary Anderson kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**TEN** 11:02, Gary Anderson kicks 34-yard field goal

**CAR** 10:40, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith to the left for 67-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**TEN** 8:44, DeShaun Foster fumbles, recovered by Keith Bulluck (TEN), 32-yard return for TD (Gary Anderson kick)

**CAR** 3:44, Jake Delhomme passes to Nick Goings to the right for 8-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

### Team Stats

	TEN	CAR
First Downs	15	19
Rushes-Yards	36-134	17-44
Passing-Yards	214	339
Comp-Att-Int	13-25-0	31-49-0
Punts-Avg.	7-43.3	6-44.2
Fumbles-Lost	2-0	4-4
Penalties-Yards	2-0	4-4
Time of Possession	33:28	26:32

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Tennessee: McNair 12-22-190-1, Volek 1-2-50-1, Hentrich 0-1-0-0. Carolina: Delhomme 31-49-362-2.

**Rushing** — Tennessee: Holcombe 16-53, George 18-51, McNair 2-30. Carolina: Davis 11-20, Foster 2-10, Delhomme 2-9, Goings 1-7, Smith 1-(-2).

**Receiving** — Tennessee: Bennett 4-97, Berlin 1-50, Mason 2-39, Calico 1-20, McCareins 1-17, Kinney 2-10, McNair 1-4, Holcombe 1-3. Carolina: Smith 10-151, Muhammad 2-70, Goings 4-38, Mangum 4-34, Hoover 3-25, Foster 4-20, Proehl 2-12, Davis 1-9, Smart 1-3.

**Attendance** — 72,851

# Kasay Wins Another Close One for Carolina

**A**s Stephen Davis goes, so go the Carolina Panthers. And boy, was Davis going.

Davis, who was held to 20 yards on 11 carries in the Panthers' loss to Tennessee last week, was back in form. He rushed for 178 yards and two touchdowns as Carolina beat the New Orleans Saints 23-20 in overtime.

"We gave them a heavy dose of Stephen," said Carolina coach John Fox. "He started fast and finished fast."

Davis has rushed for more than 100 yards five times

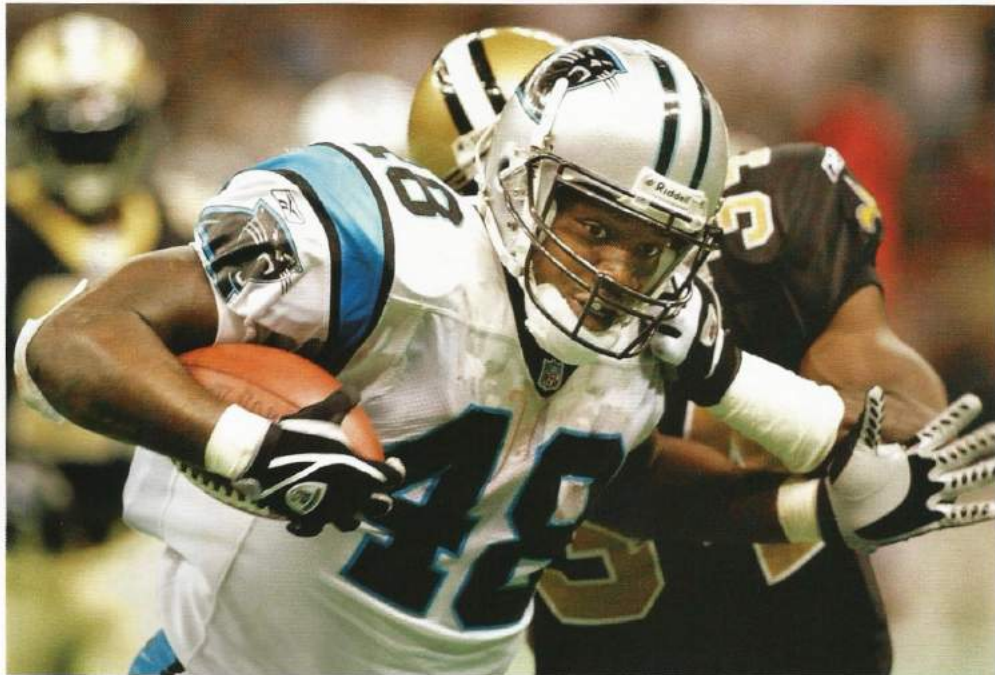
this season, including 159 in Carolina's first game against the Saints. His teams are 19-4 when he breaks 100.

Davis had a key 34-yard run in overtime to set up John Kasay's 31-yard field goal for the victory that kept the Panthers atop the NFC South.

"He is a great running back and he had a few long runs today," Saints coach Jim Haslett said. "They do a great job in the running game and that is the thing you have to stop."

The Panthers (6-1), who have led the division since the opening week, rallied in the closing minutes — only

**Stephen Davis finished with 178 yards rushing and 2 TD's against the Saints.**





**New Orleans defender Ashley Ambrose (33) breaks up a TD pass intended for Panthers receiver Steve Smith in the end zone in the first half.**

to see the Saints come back to force overtime.

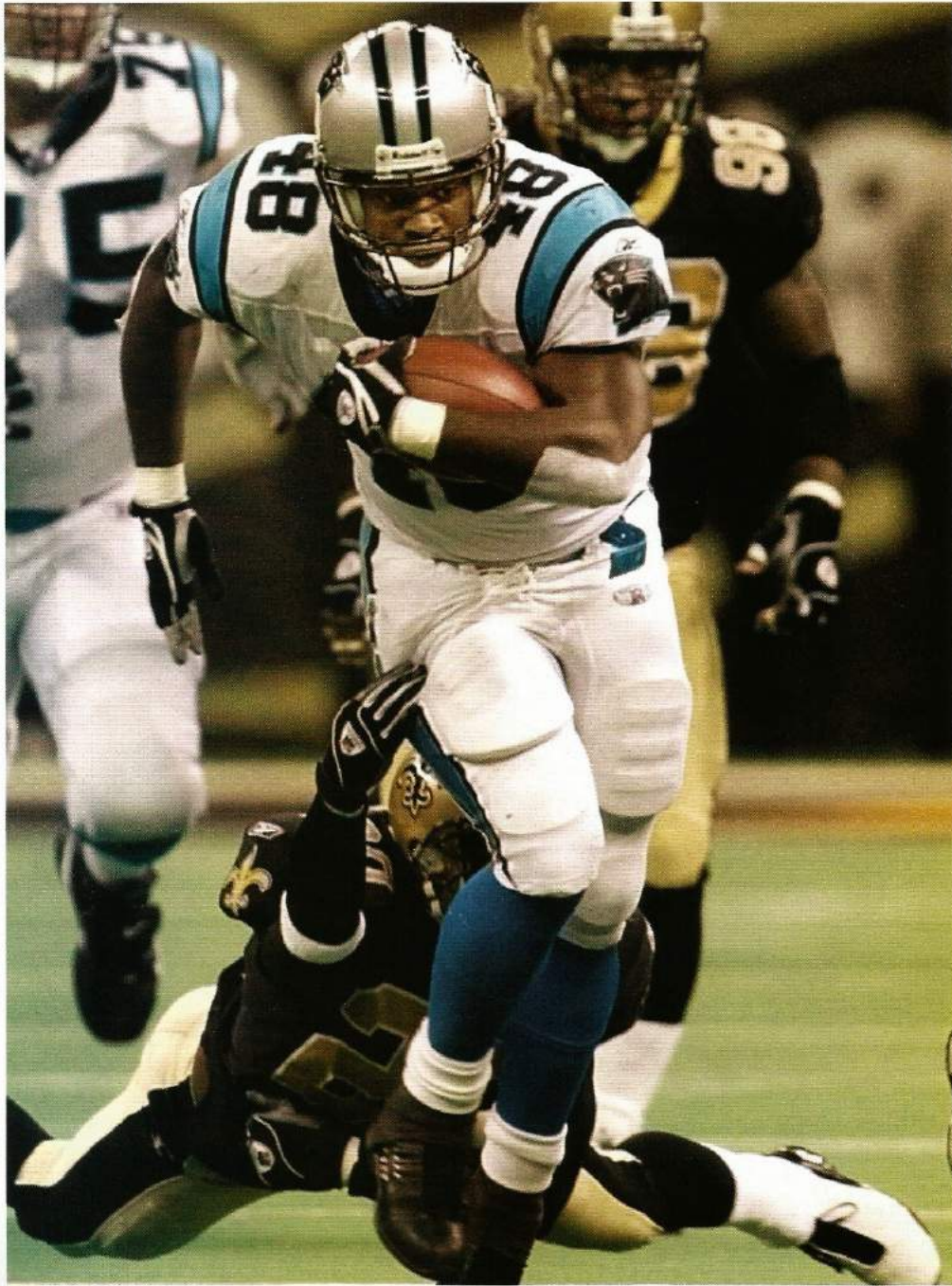
"Things were not going our way," Carolina quarterback Jake Delhomme said. "I couldn't get a rhythm, but we could run."

Carolina staged a 58-yard drive, fueled by two pass interference calls and capped by Davis' second touchdown, a 1-yard dive that put Carolina up 20-17 with

3:45 left.

The Saints (3-5) tied it on a 42-yard field goal by John Carney with 36 seconds to go.

New Orleans won the coin toss in overtime and drove to the Carolina 37 before Dence McAllister fumbled on fourth-and-1. Then Carolina went 50 yards, with Davis breaking free for 33, and Kasay hit his third



field goal of the game.

"We stayed with what we do best," Davis said. "That's running the ball."

Carolina's loss last week to Tennessee snapped a seven-game winning streak dating to last season. The Panthers' 10-1 record over the previous 11 games had been the best in the NFL.

Former Saints quarterback Delhomme completed 12 of 27 passes for 148 yards for Carolina. Steve Smith had nine catches for 100 yards.

McAllister had 101 yards rushing for the Saints on 26 carries. Joe Horn had 74 yards and two touchdowns.

It was a typical game for the Panthers and Saints, tight and with defense dominating. Five of the six games between the teams the last three seasons have been decided by a touchdown or less. It was the sixth straight meeting decided in the last two minutes or overtime.

**Stephen Davis (48) fights for extra yardage as New Orleans Saints defender Tebucky Jones (34) dives to catch him in overtime.**

Carolina took a 3-0 lead on Kasay's 24-yard field goal in the first quarter. And when Aaron Brooks dropped the football behind his back while trying to pass, Dan Morgan recovered, setting up Carolina on the Saints 25. Delhomme completed his first pass of the game, a 22-yarder to Kris Mangum, and two plays later Davis dived over the middle to make it 10-0.

The Saints, after generating just 13 yards in the first quarter, put together a 72-yard drive, capped by a 14-yard pass to Horn to cut the Panthers' lead to 10-7.

New Orleans took the lead with 1:17 left in the half when Brooks hit Horn again in the end zone, this time a 23-yarder.

Steve Gleason blocked Todd Sauerbrun's punt and the Saints recovered on the Carolina 29 with 4 seconds left in the half. Carney kicked a 47-yard field goal as time ran out for a 17-10 Saints lead.

Carolina opened the third quarter with a 29-yard field goal by Kasay.

— By The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS | OCTOBER 26, 2003

**Carolina 3 7 3 7 3 — 23**  
**New Orleans 0 17 0 3 0 — 20**

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 5:19, John Kasay kicks 24-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**CAR** 13:34, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**NO** 9:08, Aaron Brooks passes to Joe Horn down the middle for 14-yard TD (John Carney kick)

**NO** 1:24, Aaron Brooks passes to Joe Horn to the left for 23 yards (John Carney kick)

**NO** 0:04, John Carney kicks 46-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 11:59, John Kasay kicks 29-yard field goal

#### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 3:51, Stephen Davis runs to the right for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**NO** 0:41, John Carney kicks 42-yard field goal

#### Overtime

**CAR** 10:28, John Kasay kicks 31-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	CAR	NO
First Downs	20	19
Rushes-Yards	39-223	29-104
Passing Yards	145	190
Comp-Att-Int	12-27-0	21-34-1
Punts-Avg.	7-38.4	6-42.3
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	3-2
Penalties-Yards	6-50	4-43
Time of Possession	33:52	30:44

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 12-27-148-0. New Orleans: Brooks 20-33-187-2, Horn 1-1-14-0.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 31-178, Foster 3-25, Smith 1-10, Delhomme 3-6, Hoover 1-4. New Orleans: McAllister 26-101, Brooks 2-3, Carter 1-0.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Smith 9-100, Mangrum 1-22, Davis 1-17, Proehl 1-9. New Orleans: Horn 6-74, Pathon 3-34, McAllister 3-32, Conwell 3-23, Carter 1-11, Gardner 1-11, Williams 2-8, Rasby 1-6, Smith 1-2.

**Attendance** — 68,370





# Backup Leads Texans' Win Over Carolina

**W**ith the Houston Texans relying on backups at quarterback and tailback, tight end Billy Miller lent a hand.

Miller split two defenders for a one-handed touchdown catch early in the fourth quarter — just his second score of the season — and the Texans shut down the Carolina Panthers, 14-10, today.

Carolina, which has lost two of three games after a 5-0 start, took a 10-7 lead on John Kasay's 23-yard field goal at the end of a third quarter in which each team had one possession.

But Houston's Tony Banks connected with Miller for the winning points on a second-down play from the Panthers 20 with 9 1/2 minutes left. Banks' precision pass traveled between Carolina's Ricky Manning and Greg Favors, and Miller cradled the ball as he strode 4 yards into the end zone.

Banks, playing because starting quarterback David

**Panthers wide receiver Steve Smith (89) makes a touchdown catch with Houston defender Jamie Sharper (55) in pursuit during the first quarter.**



Panthers cornerback Reggie Howard (23) is tackled by Houston running back Dominick Davis (37) after breaking up a pass play in the second quarter.

Carr sat out with a sprained right ankle, was 10-of-15 for 121 yards and did not throw an interception or lose a fumble.

Houston also lost rookie tailback Domanick Davis to a strained chest in the second half after a 74-yard day. Davis was trying to become the first player to run for 100 yards in each of his first three NFL starts. Stacey Mack replaced him in the Texans' backfield and tied the game at 7 halfway through the third quarter with a 1-yard scoring lunge.

After Miller's TD in the final period, Carolina did move to Houston's 31 on its next series.

But the drive stalled when receiver Steve Smith, who scored the Panthers' touchdown, kicked defensive tack-

le Jerry Deloach after a catch and was flagged for a 15-yard personal foul. Carolina punted and never threatened again.

The Panthers fed the Texans (3-5) a steady diet of Stephen Davis on the game's opening drive, rushing him eight times for 20 yards to set up the occasional throw by Jake Delhomme. One of those passes, a 24-yarder to Smith over the middle, put Carolina up 7-0 midway through the first quarter.

Carolina's Davis, the NFC's leading rusher, finished with 153 yards on 30 carries.

The rest of the opening half was marked by a Carolina offense that gained plenty of yards but couldn't score again, and an officiating crew that had two gaffes

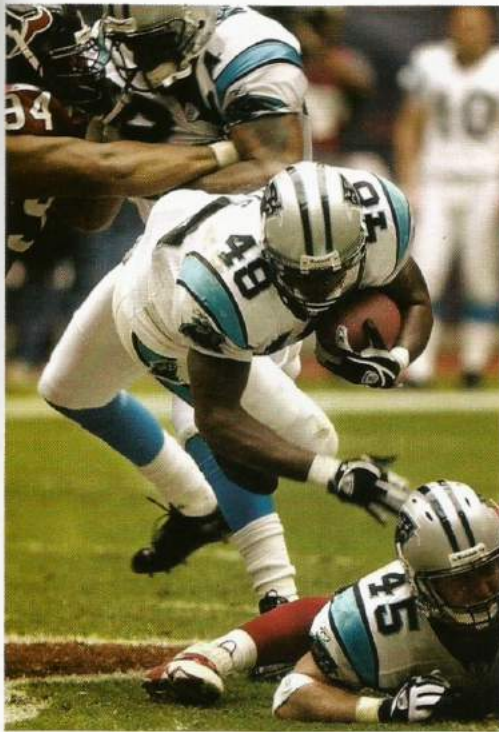


reversed by replay in four minutes.

In the second quarter, Chad Stanley punted from near midfield to Smith, who waved for a fair catch. But Smith was knocked off the play by Houston's Derrick Vaughn, who was blocked into the returner. Officials initially ruled the ball touched Smith, giving the Texans possession at Carolina's 4. But replays showed the ball did not hit Smith and belonged to Carolina.

Moments later, Stephen Davis lost the ball after being tackled by Jay Foreman, and cornerback Aaron Glenn picked it up and dashed 48 yards for an apparent score. Carolina coach John Fox threw his red flag a second time, and again referee Ron Blum reversed the call after seeing the ground clearly caused the fumble.

— *By The Associated Press*



Stephen Davis (48) goes airborne in the second quarter against the Texans. Davis finished with 153 yards rushing on 30 carries.

HOUSTON | NOVEMBER 2, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>— 10</b>
<b>Houston</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>— 14</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 8:23, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith down the middle for 24-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 3rd Quarter

**HOU** 6:54, Stacey Mack runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (Kris Brown kick)

**CAR** 0:10, John Kasay kicks 23-yard field goal

#### 4th Quarter

**HOU** 9:34, Tony Banks passes to Billy Miller down the middle for 20-yard TD (Kris Brown kick)

### Team Stats

	CAR	HOU
First Downs	20	14
Rushes-Yards	35-174	30-118
Passing Yards	152	149
Comp-Att-Int	12-21-1	13-19-0
Punts-Avg.	3-49.0	3-48.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties-Yards	4-40	7-55
Time of Possession	29:45	30:15

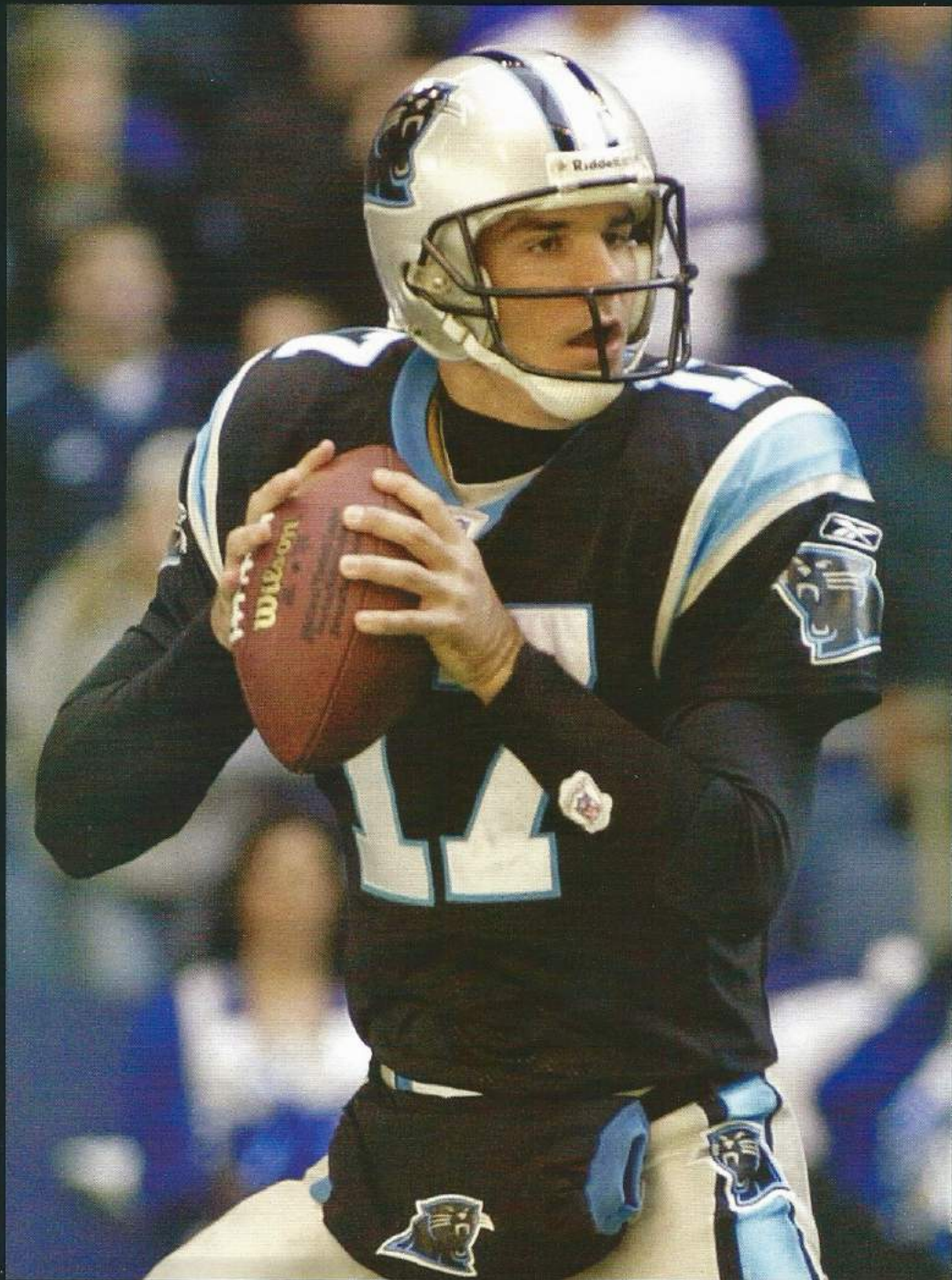
### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: 23-13-193-1. Houston: Banks 19-13-154-1.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 30-153, Foster 3-13, Smith 1-6, Delhomme 1-2. Houston: Davis 12-74, Mack 15-28, Banks 2-12, Hollings 1-6.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Smith 5-88, Mangum 2-47, Muhammad 2-29, Hoover 1-10, Goings 1-9, Wiggins 1-6, Foster 1-4. Houston: Johnson 4-64, Miller 4-58, Gaffney 3-30, Norris 1-5, Davis 1(-3).

**Attendance** — 70,052



# Delhomme Turns His Bayou Home Blue and Black

BY LYNN ZINER  
*The New York Times*  
 Published: January 26, 2004

**T**wo summers ago, Jake Delhomme and his father spent a stretch of a bayou summer in Breaux Bridge, La., pulling bricks off a small, old house. The heat soared into the 90's, the humidity as thick and wet as the bayou itself. Jake was moving his grandparents' house a quarter-mile down the road, so he and his wife, Keri, could refurbish it and live in it. People zipping by on the two-lane highway stared in disbelief. An N.F.L. quarterback and his father, sweating through their clothes, tore down the bricks by hand.

"It's funny," Delhomme said. "You get started doing it, and the next thing you know you've got a few friends see you and say, 'I'll come help you.' And they do it. That's what I mean by a way of life. That's how people are."

Jake Delhomme laughed at the memory. He was sitting a long way from that house - on some steps outside the Carolina Panthers' locker room in Charlotte, N.C., wolfing down a few slices of pizza, a quick break from the whirlwind that has made him the Panthers' improbable Super Bowl quarterback.

His face, still wide-eyed and boyish at 29, will be beamed around the world this week, as the world's media line up to hear his story in a Cajun accent. They will latch onto the underdog's tale, the guy from nowhere who made it big, built his career the way he moved that house, by hand, brick by brick.

Delhomme has never left Breaux Bridge, a place so special that none of his huge family - none of the 21 Delhomme grandchildren - has moved away. Delhomme moved the house his father had grown up in to a spot right next to his parents, Jerry and Marcia. It is a stone's throw from his brother, Jeff, next to the stables

where the family trains thoroughbreds. The extended family can get together for any reason. If someone picks up a couple of sacks of crawfish, a Delhomme reunion is launched.

Jake Delhomme would live nowhere else.

"I think it's a magical place," he said.

The magic that has delivered Delhomme to the top of his sport started in Breaux Bridge, population 7,281 in the 2000 census, a wisp of a town two hours west of New Orleans. The three-block downtown has street signs written in French and English, homage to Cajuns' French-speaking roots.

In this small, quiet place, the ultimate underdog was born. Jake, youngest of the Delhomme grandchildren, always chased the older ones around. He would do anything to stay in their games. The challenges did not look so big when the alternative was being the only one left out.

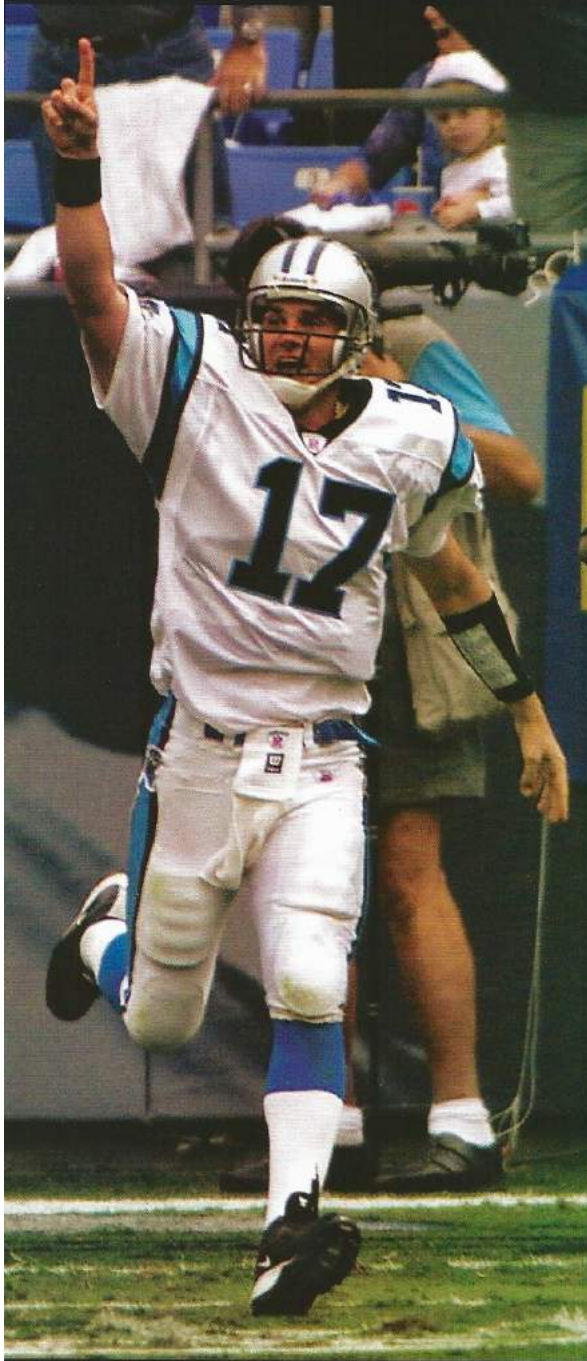
He had enthusiasm and a belief that he could do anything, and people could not help but get swept up in it.

"I can remember Jake on the back of the sofa with a jockey helmet and a whip, pretending he was a jockey," Jerry said. "Or he'd be running around competing with Jeff in something."

The world saw Delhomme only after he left home. He had played college football a few miles away, at the university now called Louisiana-Lafayette, and he stuck for six seasons with the Saints, two hours down I-10. He could have stayed there, as the backup everyone loved, but the Saints kept bouncing him around, from the practice squad to the roster with two stops in N.F.L. Europe. He believed he could start, but the Saints never did.

With Delhomme a free agent last off-season, the Carolina Panthers saw something in him. They offered him a contract and told him he could compete for the starting job. He felt a few pangs, but he signed.

He broke the news to his hometown last spring at a Breaux Bridge Chamber of Commerce meeting, which



usually draws about 50 people but swelled to 400 to hear him. He said he hoped everyone could support him. There was no question everyone would.

"People might be Saints fans," said Jack Dale Delhomme, Breaux Bridge's mayor and a cousin of Jerry's in a town where it only seems as if everyone is related. "But mostly they are Jake fans."

Folks in Breaux Bridge still remember him as a skinny 13-year-old asked to start his first game midway through his freshman season at Teurlings High School, a 100-pound kid surveying a field of juniors and seniors. He led a terrible team to two victories, and no one started ahead of him again.

At his college, then called Southwestern Louisiana, coaches had planned to redshirt him. But at halftime of the first game, the Ragin' Cajuns trailed by 35-0. They sent in Delhomme. He was still skinny. He still stared down a field full of juniors and seniors. And by the end of the game, the score was 35-33. No one started ahead of him again.

In Carolina this season, he was made the backup again after Coach John Fox chose the veteran Rodney Peete as the starter. Delhomme had moved, only to find himself in the same place again.

Back in Breaux Bridge, Delhomme's family watched Carolina's first game against Jacksonville the same way it had watched the Saints games, hopeful he would play but resigned that he most likely would not. The Panthers were losing, 17-0, at halftime when the Delhommies sat down for dinner. Their phone rang. Delhomme's wife, Keri, who was Jake's high school sweetheart, was calling from the stadium with the three words they all waited to hear: "Jake's warming up."

"We ran in the living room, threw the food away and opened the beer," Jerry said.

They watched Delhomme do the same thing he had done in high school and college: take his one chance and run with it. He had always believed in himself. He rarely did anything spectacular. He just won. The trick was getting the chance to make others believe.

Delhomme said he felt the full impact of the moment as it happened. He charged onto the field, manic

Cutline for this photograph will go in this space right here just like this right here. Cutline for this photograph will go in this space right here just like

as always, and high-fived his teammates in the huddle. He saw that they were giving him funny looks.

"They didn't really know me," Delhomme said. "I was the new guy. I remember breaking the huddle and walking up to the line of scrimmage, and I kind of took it in in one instant. I said, 'O.K., this is what you've always wanted, make the most of it.'"

His first pass produced a 13-yard touchdown. By the end, he threw for two more scores, the last with 16 seconds left to clinch a 24-23 victory, the largest comeback in Panthers history. No one started ahead of him again.

Back home, the food remained forgotten. The Delhomme's party had no reason to end.

"I was like, if he doesn't do anything else for the rest of the season, I'm fine with it," his brother, Jeff, said. "Just watching his performance, I thought, 'At least he's showing everybody he can play.' I told my wife, 'I don't care if he wins another game.'"

But Delhomme did win, leading the Panthers to 11 regular-season victories, eight on second-half comebacks. He led them to seven game-winning fourth-quarter drives. He led them to three playoff victories, one thanks to his 69-yard pass to Steve Smith in the second overtime at St. Louis. A stunning road victory at Philadelphia put the Panthers in the Super Bowl, pro football's grandest stage.

Now, in the days leading to the Super Bowl, little Breaux Bridge has taken on a new look: Panthers colors. Shops have bright blue and black bunting hanging outside. Nearly every storefront carries good-luck wishes for the town's favorite son.

The TV trucks are streaming into town to capture the scene. One day last week, they lined up four deep in Jerry and Marcia's driveway, waiting for a sound bite from the quarterback's parents. Members of the news media are streaming into the office of Jack Dale, whom everyone, including Jerry, calls the Mayor. He has become the family's flamboyant spokesman, a wiry man with slicked-back hair waving his arms to punctuate his tales of Delhomme's childhood.

He was in the group watching the games in Jerry and Marcia's living room, everyone in the same seats. They are horse people, and superstitions come naturally. The problem was, the Mayor kept jumping in front of the TV so no one else could see. They shouted him back to his seat.

Now the Mayor fills his calendar with network appearances. One day last week, he was up at 4 a.m. to appear on ESPN2's morning show, "Cold Pizza."

"We all have dreams," the Mayor said. "If you have those dreams, the key is, can you go out and reach those goals? The majority of us, we dream and that's it. We stop there. With Jake, he never let it stop him. They sent him back home and he never quit. And now his dream's being fulfilled. A lot of us want to do that. He did it. He left home."

**"They didn't really know me," Delhomme said. "I was the new guy. I remember breaking the huddle and walking up to the line of scrimmage, and I kind of took it in in one instant. I said, 'O.K., this is what you've always wanted, make the most of it.'"**

But did he? Home remains the small, old house next door to his parents, adorned in beige siding now instead of bricks, set back from the road so Delhomme can build a bigger one in front of it when he and Keri, who have a 1-year-old daughter, have more children. But the old house will always stay. A hundred yards away sits the old red barn, filled with thoroughbreds, where Delhomme will still shovel manure out of the stalls. His kids will grow up doing the same thing, on this simple piece of land next to the two-lane highway.

The Delhommies will still get together over sacks of crawfish. They will laugh and love life and will not ever think of leaving.

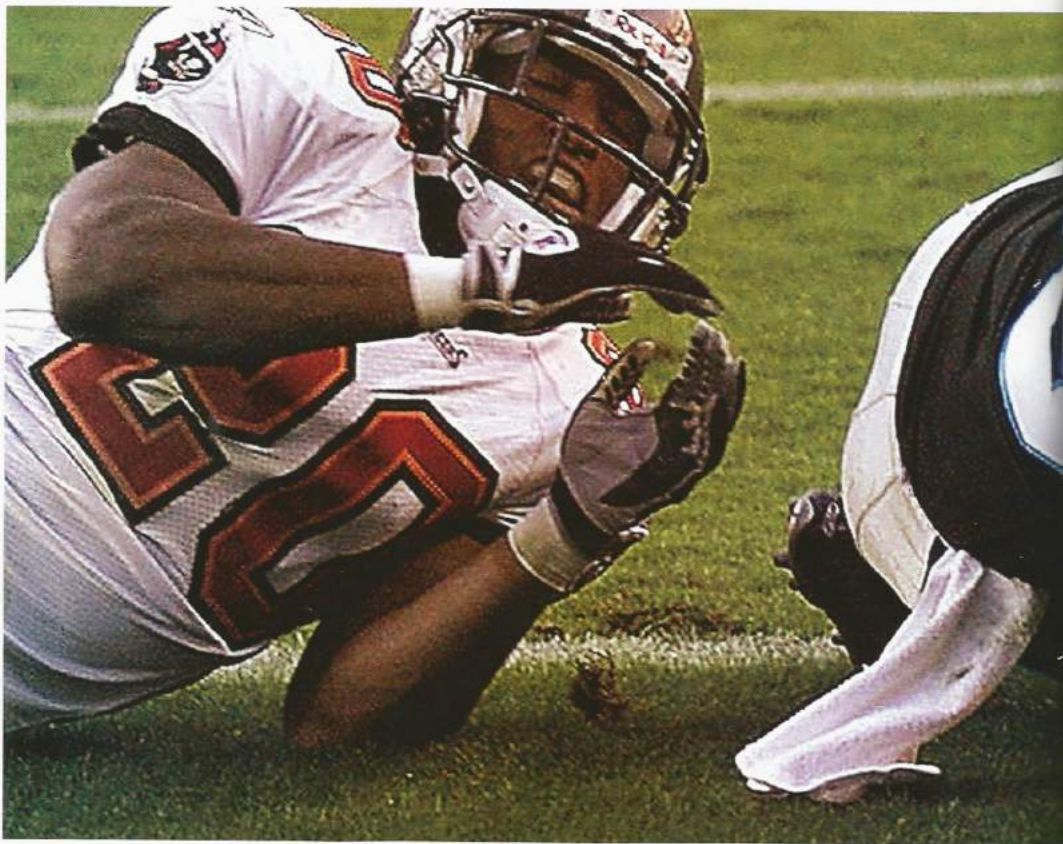
"It's a fun way of life," Delhomme said. "We enjoy life and enjoy family and we have a good time. That's the way it is. I'm lucky. There's no reason to change."

# Delhomme's Late TD Pass Tops Tampa Bay

**T**he Carolina Panthers vowed to do their talking on the field and did, silencing the trash-talking Tampa Bay Buccaneers by handing them a severe setback on their path back to the Super Bowl.

Jake Delhomme's 5-yard touchdown pass to Steve Smith with 1:06 remaining overcame a late Tampa Bay rally and lifted the Panthers to a 27-24 victory today in the matchup of two suddenly bitter rivals.

Tampa Bay defensive end Simeon Rice guaranteed a Buccaneers victory earlier this week, but the defending



champions are now left with only a slight chance of even winning the NFC South. The Bucs (4-5) trail the Panthers (7-2) by three games and Carolina holds the tiebreaker after a season sweep.

Carolina declined to respond to Tampa Bay's baiting all week, promising the Panthers would have plenty to say Sunday. It's no secret the two blue-collar teams dislike each other, with Tampa Bay tackle Kenyatta Walker even calling his battles with Carolina defensive end Julius Peppers "personal."

There was no denying that early as the two sparred

**Carolina's Steve Smith falls into the end zone for the game-winning, five-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter.**

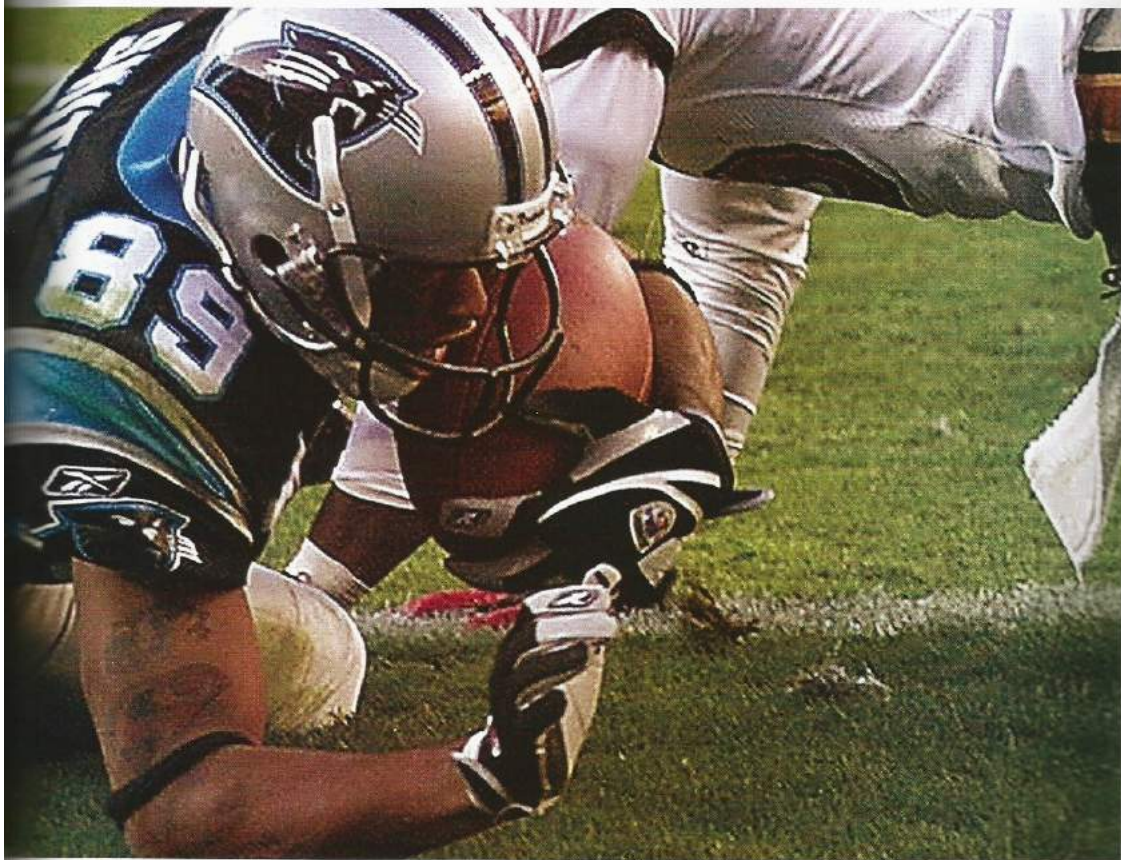
on nearly every play, leading to trash-talking, taunting, and flaring on-field tempers as Carolina built a 20-13 lead and Walker was lured into three personal fouls.

But the Bucs proved they can never be counted out behind Brad Johnson, who threw two fourth-quarter touchdowns to rally Tampa Bay.

His 23-yard touchdown pass to Keyshawn Johnson made it 20-14 with 10:19 to play. On the next possession, facing fourth-and-1, Brad Johnson dumped off an 18-yard pass to Warren Sapp to keep the drive alive.

Keenan McCardell then made a one-armed circus catch at the edge of the end zone for a 36-yard touchdown and a 21-20 Tampa Bay lead with 4:44 to play.

The Bucs seemed to put the game away when Jake Delhomme was intercepted for the second time by Tim







Wansley — he returned the first one 23 yards for a touchdown in the second quarter — to give Tampa Bay the ball on the Carolina 28.

Martin Gramatica converted it into a 39-yard field goal for a 24-20 lead, surely enough for a team admittedly not built to come back against top-level opponents.

Already playing without Stephen Davis, the NFC's leading rusher and the only real pulse in Carolina's offense, the Panthers knew the final drive would be daunting.

But in his best game yet in Carolina, Delhomme stayed calm in a score-or-lose situation. He threw a 29-yard pass over the middle to a wide-open Ricky Proehl, then held

**Tampa Bay defender Derrick Brooks loses his helmet after being stiff-armed by DeShaun Foster (20) in the first half.**

strong in a quickly collapsing pocket to throw a 22-yarder to Muhsin Muhammad as he was getting hit.

As both teams hurried back to the line, Delhomme quickly hit Smith on the edge of the end zone. Smith was in the air when he made the catch and was flipped over the line by a defender for the go-ahead score.

The Panthers then sealed it by holding the Bucs on their final try with heavy pressure on two attempts before Johnson's pass to McCardell on fourth-and-6 was juggled for a no-catch.

Delhomme finished 20-for-32 for 277 yards with two touchdowns — he also threw a 66-yarder to Proehl — and two interceptions. Proehl finished with three catches for 133 yards.

Mike Minter scored on a 29-yard interception return for Carolina and John Kasay made both his field goal attempts to remain a perfect 20-for-20 on the year.

— *By The Associated Press*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | NOVEMBER 9, 2003

**Tampa Bay** 0 7 0 17 — 24  
**Carolina** 10 0 10 7 — 27

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 11:14, Brad Johnson throws an interception to the left, 29-yard return by Mike Minter (John Kasay kick)

**CAR** 2:12, John Kasay kicks 47-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**TB** 6:27, Jake Delhomme throws an interception to the right, 22-yard return by Tim Wansley for TD (Martin Gramatica kick)

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 8:34, John Kasay kicks 45-yard field goal

**CAR** 4:14, Jake Delhomme passes to Ricky Proehl to the left for 66-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**TB** 10:26, Brad Johnson passes to Keyshawn Johnson to the right for 23-yard TD (Martin Gramatica kick)

**TB** 4:52, Brad Johnson passes to Keenan McCardell to the right for 36-yard TD (Martin Gramatica kick)

**TB** 2:55, Martin Gramatica kicks 39-yard field goal

**CAR** 1:06, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith down the middle for 5-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

### Team Stats

	TB	CAR
First Downs	18	18
Rushes-Yards	19-89	31-78
Passing Yards	256	263
Comp-Att-Int	24-43-1	20-32-2
Punts-Avg.	7-41.4	5-39.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-0
Penalties-Yards	9-95	7-64
Time of Possession	33:09	29:51

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Tampa Bay: Johnson 24-43-275-2. Carolina: Delhomme 20-32-277-2.

**Rushing** — Tampa Bay: Pittman 12-50, Johnson 2-14, Stecker 2-13, Jones 3-12. Carolina: Foster 22-56, Smith 1-14, Delhomme 5-5, Goings 1-2, Smart 1-1, Muhammad 1-0.

**Receiving** — Tampa Bay: McCardell 1-9, Johnson 5-80, Pittman 5-47, Sapp 1-18, Cook 3-12, Jones 1-0. Carolina: Proel 3-133, Smith 9-72, Muhammad 4-46, Hankton 1-12, Mangum 1-10, Seidman 1-6, Foster 1-(-2).

**Attendance** — 73,245

# Davis Romps for Winning TD Against Redskins

**S**tephen Davis was careful all week to keep his level of dislike for the Washington Redskins bottled up. Scoring the winning touchdown against his former team finally allowed him to release it.

Davis screamed as he exited his post-game news conference, a jubilant cry after he lifted the Carolina Panthers to a 20-17 victory over the Redskins today.

"He was their focal point, their stud, their Pro Bowl guy," Carolina quarterback Jake Delhomme said. "I guarantee that that yell he let out — it was relief that it was over and we got it done. He's not one to rub it in."

He downplayed the showdown with the Redskins and coach Steve Spurrier, who phased him out of the offense last season before ultimately releasing him. After seven seasons, three of them 1,000-yard years, and two Pro Bowl appearances, Davis couldn't believe he was cast off.

So he set out for a "take-that, Steve Spurrier" game and delivered with the winning score on a 3-yard run with 1:09 remaining to help Carolina (8-2) continue its roll through the NFC.

**Jake Delhomme (17) runs past Washington defender Jessie Armstead (98) for a 1-yard touchdown in the third quarter.**





"It was personal, very personal," he said softly. "I spent seven years of my career there and I know a lot of people there. It was very personal."

The Panthers knew that and were intent on not letting Washington (4-6) spoil Davis' day of redemption.

"There is a lot of loyalty already built with our team with Stephen, even though he is a new player," said coach John Fox. "They knew it was a very important game for him."

But he didn't get off to the greatest start, fumbling on his first carry — he later chalked it up to nerves — and spending long gaps alone on the bench with a towel over his head as he rested the sprained ankle that sidelined him last week.

But after Patrick Ramsey put the Redskins up 17-13 with 4:19 to play on a 10-yard pass to Patrick Johnson, Davis stepped up to show Washington just what they gave up.

On fourth-and-1 on the Carolina 38, everyone in Ericsson Stadium expected a handoff with the game on the line. Instead, Jake Delhomme tossed to Davis, who scampered 25 yards up the sideline.

After a 30-yard completion to Steve Smith to the 7, it

was all Davis. He broke a tackle at the line and used a huge second effort for a 6-yard gain, then took another handoff and barely scored before the ball was knocked out of his hands.

"I don't think he scored, but it's not my call," safety Matt Bowen said. "Whether he got in or not, we don't let him down there in the first place and we don't even have to talk about that play."

Davis went to the sidelines and stood alone to watch Washington's final drive. Ramsey threw four consecutive incompletions and Davis rushed out onto the field to celebrate with the defense when it was over.

"Those guys had my back on this one," he said. "They knew that it was important for us as a team and for me personally."

He finished with 92 yards rushing on 28 carries, compared to the 54 yards rushing the Redskins managed. Davis now has 1,084 yards.

"What do you want me to say?" Spurrier said when asked about Davis. "He's having a wonderful year, we all know that. He's an excellent back, we know that."

The Redskins played a terrible first half, with just 41

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | NOVEMBER 16, 2003

<b>Washington</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>

**Scoring Summary**

**2nd Quarter**

**CAR** 13:50, John Kasay kicks 25-yard field goal

**WAS** 3:25, John Hall kicks 23-yard field goal

**3rd Quarter**

**CAR** 11:43, Jake Delhomme runs to the left for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**4th Quarter**

**WAS** 12:00, Patrick Ramsey passes to Darnerien McCants to the right for 4-yard TD (John Hall kick)

**CAR** 5:26, John Kasay kicks 26-yard field goal

**WAS** 4:32, Patrick Ramsey passes to Patrick Johnson down the middle for 10-yard TD (John Hall kick)

**CAR** 1:20, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 3-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**Team Stats**

	<b>WAS</b>	<b>CAR</b>
First Downs	13	17
Rushes-Yards	22-54	35-110
Passing Yards	127	317
Comp-Att-Int	16-35-1	20-30-2
Punts-Avg.	7-43.3	4-50.3
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	3-2
Penalties-Yards	0-0	4-69
Time of Possession	25:44	34:16

**Individual Stats**

**Passing** — Washington: Ramsey 16-35-150-2. Carolina: Delhomme: 20-30-317-0.

**Rushing** — Washington: Cartwright 9-32, Candidate 10-18, Ramsey 2-4, Coles 1-0. Carolina: Davis 28-92, Goings 2-20, Foster 1-2, Delhomme 3-(-2), Smith 1-(-2).

**Receiving** — Washington: Coles 4-35, Cartwright 2-25, McCants 3-25, Gardner 2-24, Johnson 2-16, Candidate 1-13, Ware 1-6, Flemister 1-5. Carolina: Muhammad 9-189, Smith 4-50, Davis 2-40, Proehl 1-22, Mangum 1-7, Seidman 1-4, Hoover 1-3, Wiggins 1-2.

**Attendance** — 73,263



**Carolina receiver Muhsin Muhammad is tackled by Redskins' Jeremiah Trotter (54) after a 28-yard gain in the second quarter.**

yards total offense and several failed scoring opportunities after Carolina turned the ball over three times.

Davis fumbled on his first carry — an 8-yard gain that gave him 1,000 yards for the season — and the Redskins recovered on the Carolina 25. But Rock Cartwright, one of Davis' closest friends, fumbled in the end zone and the Panthers recovered.

On the next possession, Delhomme's pass bounced off Muhsin Muhammad's hands and was intercepted by Fred Smoot, who returned it 46 yards. But John

Hall's 46-yard field goal attempt sailed wide left.

The Panthers saw a near replay of that sequence in the second quarter when a ball bounced off Smith's hands for Bowen's interception that Washington turned into Hall's 23-yard field goal.

"We had a lot of opportunities early in the game, a lot of opportunities to get points," Spurrier said. "It rocked around to where we came back and took the lead in the fourth quarter, but we didn't hold onto it."

— *By The Associated Press*

# Carter's 2 TD Passes Stop Carolina

**T**hey've beaten everyone in their division and on Sunday took down the top team in the NFC.

Now, even Bill Parcells, their harshest critic, seems ready to proclaim the Dallas Cowboys a team to watch in December — and maybe even January — after the way they beat Carolina 24-20 today.

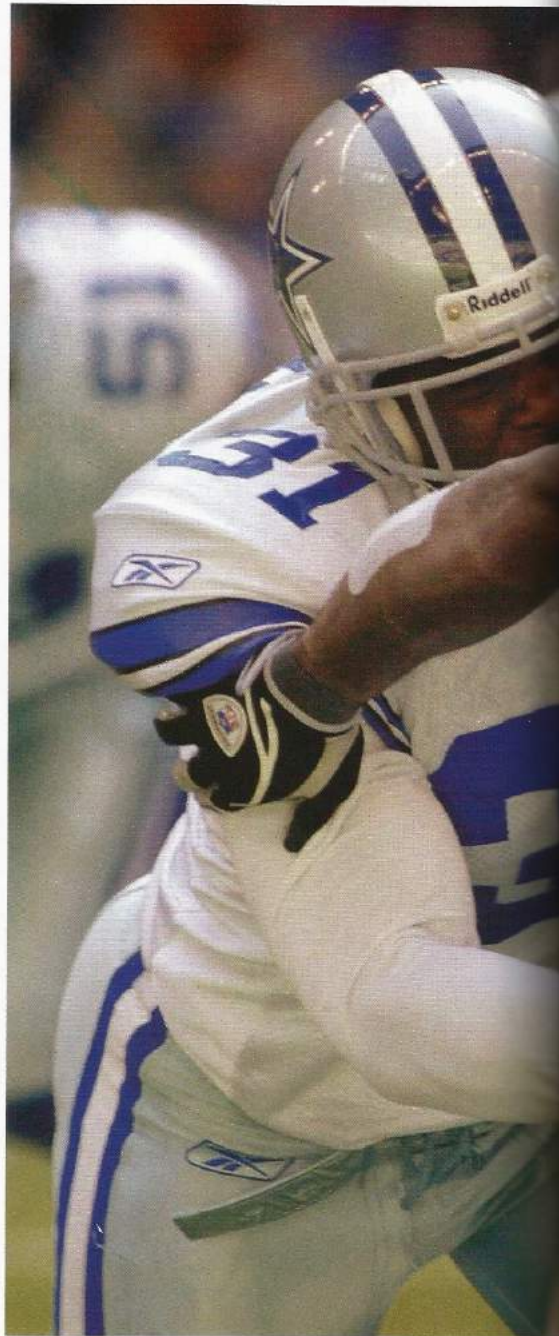
"We have a lot of football left, but we're going to be in the hunt for a while," said Parcells, showing more emotion than he has all season. "I think we've got a real shot to do something here."

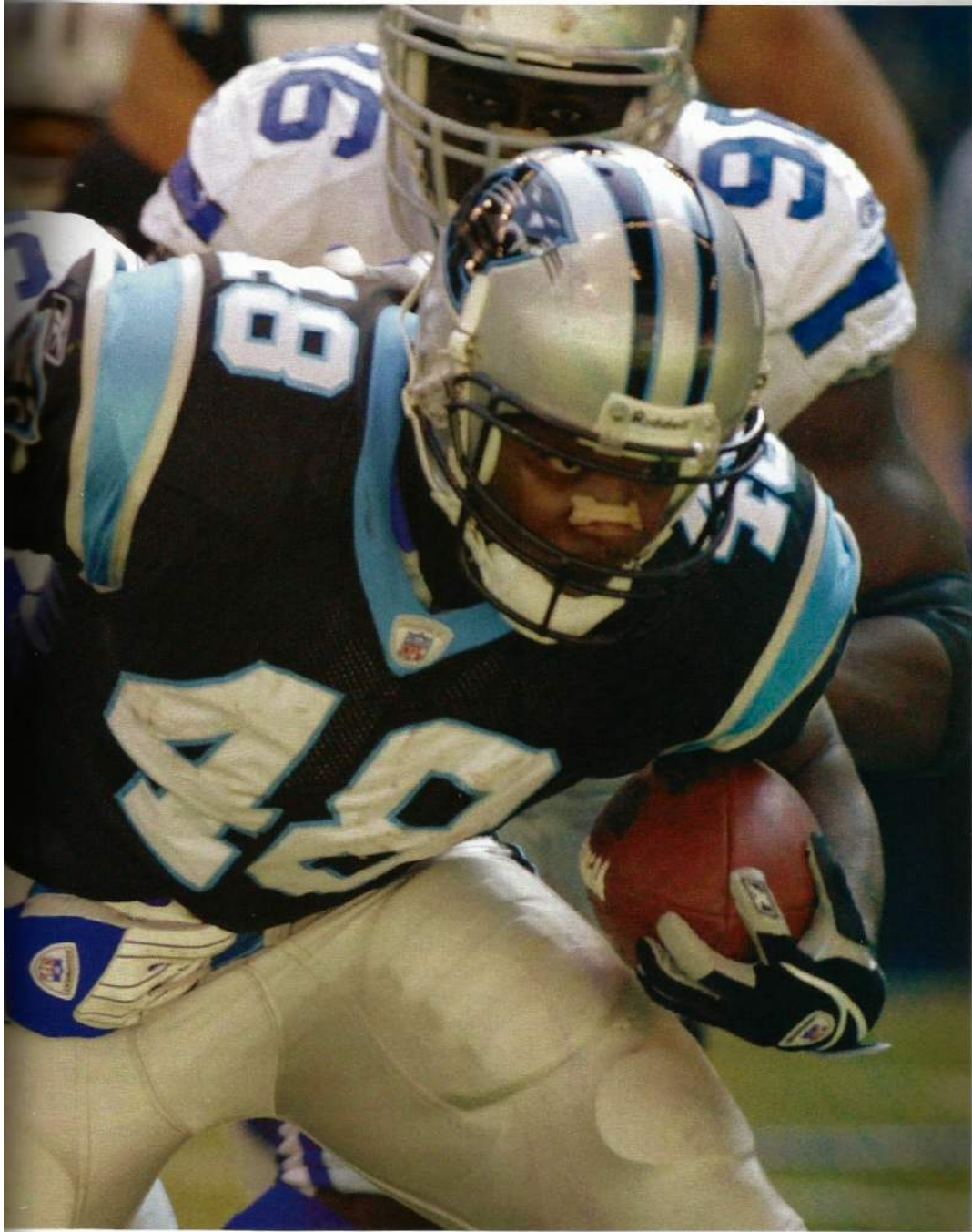
Quincy Carter threw two touchdown passes to revive a sputtering offense, then made his best plays by keeping alive the final drive and running out the clock in an otherwise sloppy, penalty-filled battle for the best record in the NFC.

Dallas (8-3) remains tied with Philadelphia for the NFC East lead and moves into a four-way tie with the Eagles, Panthers and St. Louis Rams for the best record in the conference. The Eagles play at Carolina next Sunday; Dallas is at Philadelphia the following Sunday.

Next up for the Cowboys are the Dolphins on Thursday. Parcells has been saying all season that he'd reserve judgment on this team until after that game, but

**Stephen Davis (48) is tackled by Cowboys safety Roy Williams (31) after an 8-yard run.**





IRVING, TEXAS | NOVEMBER 23, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Dallas</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>24</b>

**Scoring Summary**

**1st Quarter**

**DAL** 12:38, Billy Cundiff kicks 24-yard field goal

**CAR** 5:00, John Kasay kicks 45-yard field goal

**DAL** 2:00, Quincy Carter passes to Joey Galloway down the middle for 24-yard TD (Billy Cundiff kick)

**2nd Quarter**

**CAR** 2:20, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**3rd Quarter**

**DAL** 9:11, Quincy Carter passes to Jeff Robinson to the left for 5-yard TD (Billy Cundiff kick)

**CAR** 7:10, Jake Delhomme passes to Brad Hoover to the right for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**DAL** 4:30, Aveion Cason runs to the left for 16 yards (Billy Cundiff kick)

**4th Quarter**

**CAR** 3:51, John Kasay kicks 34-yard field goal

**Team Stats**

	<b>CAR</b>	<b>DAL</b>
First Downs	15	19
Rushes-Yards	28-75	25-65
Passing Yards	169	254
Comp-Att-Int	9-25-1	29-44-1
Punts-Avg.	5-50.2	6-35.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	0-0
Penalties-Yards	11-68	10-123
Time of Possession	26:01	33:59

**Individual Stats**

Passing — Carolina: Delhomme 9-24-175-1, Sauerbrun 0-1-1-0. Dallas: Carter 29-44-254-2.  
 Rushing — Carolina: Davis 26-59, Smith 1-12, Hoover 1-4. Dallas: Hambrick 12-26, Cason 6-26, Anderson 1-8, Carter 6-5.  
 Receiving — Carolina: Smith 4-73, Muhammad 2-58, Proehl 1-36, Davis 1-7, Hoover 1-1. Dallas: Glenn 5-74, Galloway 3-50, Witten 6-49, Anderson 6-28, Campbell 3-22, Bryant 2-17, Cason 2-9, Robinson 1-5, Hambrick 1-0.  
 Attendance — 63,871

his excitement over this win indicates his expectations are rising.

"I just thought our guys were really good today," he said. "They hung in there, fought it out and made some clutch plays. ... This was by far the best win I've had in Dallas."

The Panthers are the kings of the comeback, having won six times in the final two minutes or overtime. They couldn't make it seven.

Carolina had second-and-goal from the 6 with four minutes left when Todd Steussie was called for a false start. It was the team's fourth such penalty, the third by Steussie. Pushed back to the 11, the drive stalled there — then went to the 16 on a delay of game before fourth down.

Panthers coach John Fox already had decided to kick a field goal and hope to get the ball back rather than try for a tying touchdown.

John Kasay did his part by making a 34-yarder. With 3:47 left, it was up to Carolina's defense.

On third-and-9 from the 21, Carter ran up the middle for only four yards — but two Panthers were flagged. Dallas declined a 15-yard illegal contact penalty on Deon Grant and took a 15-yard facemasking on Brentson Buckner.

"If we didn't get two penalties on third down, it would've been good thinking," Fox said of his strategy. "When you do that, you deserve to lose."

Dallas got another first down with a 13-yard pass to Jason Witten on third-and-8 with 1:39 left, letting them run out the clock on the Panthers' second straight road loss. Carolina won its three previous road games with overtime field goals.

"We can't always rely on us coming back at the end," Buckner said.

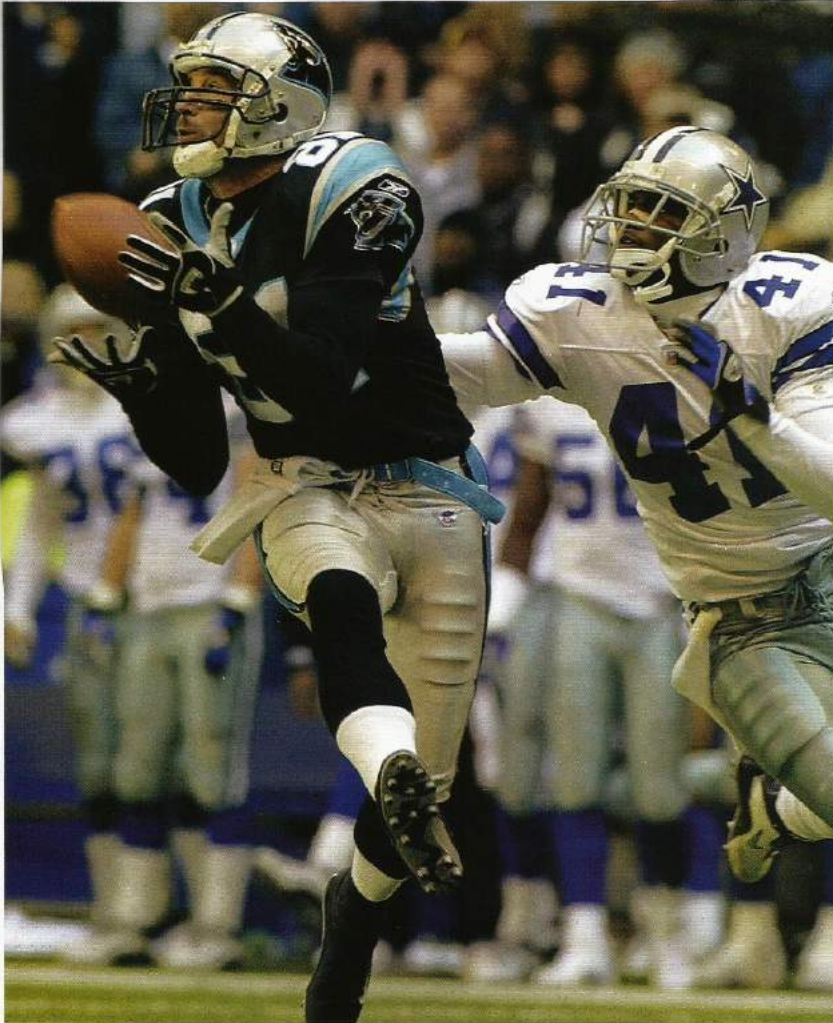
In winning their fifth straight at home, the Cowboys got three touchdowns from an offense that had scored just four the last four games, with two shutouts along the way.

"The sky's the limit for our team," linebacker Dexter Coakley said. "If we can get that through our head, we'll be right where we want to be at the end."

The two most run-oriented teams in the NFL were forced by solid defenses to take it to the air.

Carter ended up with the most attempts (44) and completions (29) of his career, for 254 yards. He threw





Ricky Proehl (81) grabs a 36-yard pass in the second quarter.

an early 24-yard TD pass to Joey Galloway and a 5-yarder to Jeff Robinson — whose primary job is deep snapping — in the third quarter.

Carolina had been answering each Dallas score with one of its own, tying the game at 3, 10 and 17. The Cowboys went ahead for good on a third-and-1 handoff to fullback Richie Anderson that turned into an option pitch to Aveion Cason for a 16-yard score.

"Parcells knows when to call plays like that," Carter said.

Carolina's Jake Delhomme was 9-for-24 for 175 yards. His first two touchdown drives were also aided by long pass interference penalties against Dallas; a third came on the Panthers' final scoring drive.

Stephen Davis became Carolina's single-season rushing leader (1,143) and tied the TD mark (seven), but otherwise had a forgettable game. After gaining 32 yards on eight carries, he had just 27 on 18 tries.

— *By The Associated Press*

# McNabb & Philly Stall Carolina's Title Hopes

**D**onovan McNabb was an easy target to blame for Philadelphia's 0-2 start. Now that the Eagles have rallied for a share of the NFC's best record, he wants little of the credit.

McNabb overcame an interception on the first play — his first in six games — to throw for a touchdown and 182 yards, hitting nine receivers while leading the Eagles to their seventh consecutive victory, 25-16 over the Carolina Panthers on Sunday.

The win kept the Eagles (9-3) tied atop the conference with St. Louis and stalled Carolina's (8-4) attempt to wrap up the NFC South.

But there was little celebration in the Philadelphia locker room, especially from McNabb.

"This is no time to go wild, you only go wild in February," he said. "Everybody counted us out early and nobody went crazy in here. We knew what we had to do to get this ship righted."

What the Eagles had to do was play mistake-free football and get better production out of McNabb. They did, going four consecutive games without a turnover while McNabb went 127 attempts without an interception.

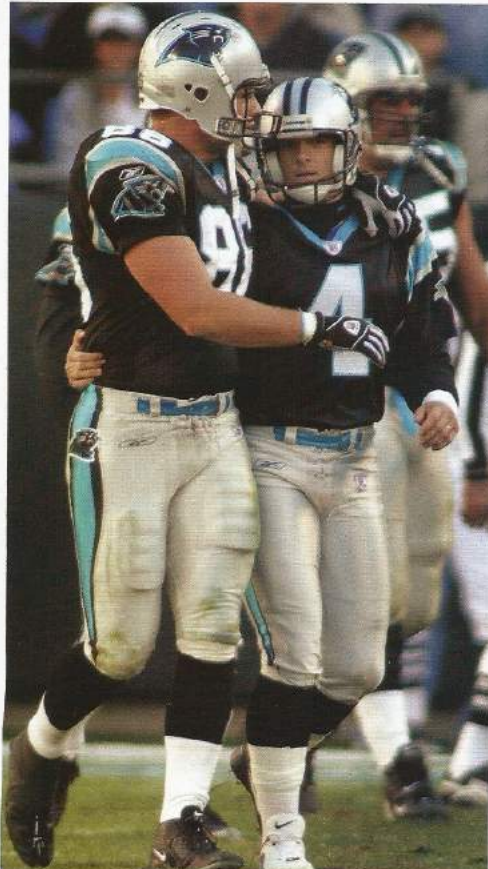
That ended on the first play when McNabb looked left, then right, and tossed the ball straight into Mike Rucker's hands.

It took McNabb all of two minutes to forget about it.

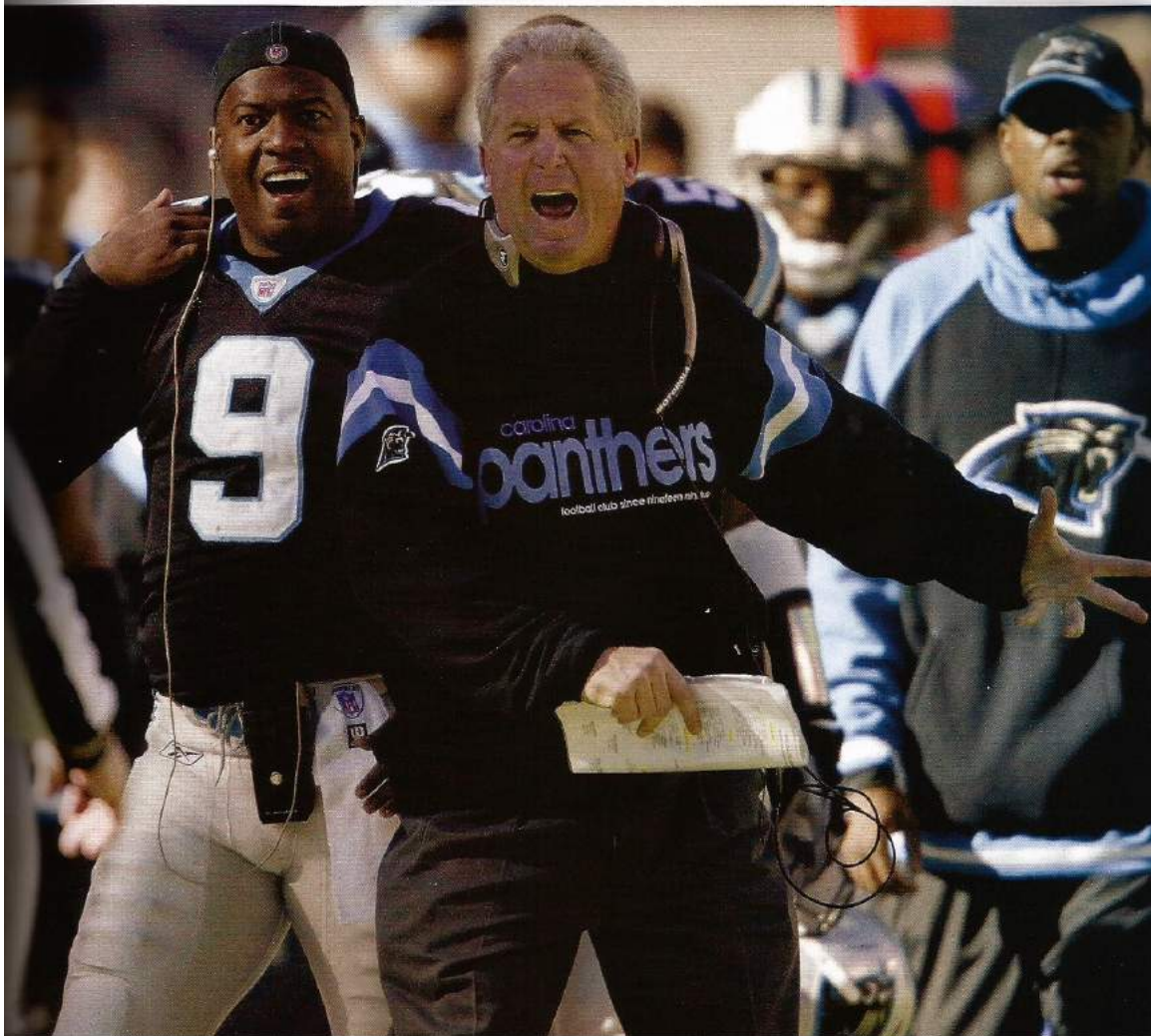
"You can't harp on mistakes," he said. "The guys want to see how you adjust to mistakes."

The Eagles made several against Carolina — Brian Westbrook also fumbled away a punt and they failed on a 2-point conversion — but the Panthers made more.

John Kasay, who came into the game 24-of-27 on field goals this season, missed three — and an extra point. The 10 points he failed to put on the board was the difference in the Panthers not ensuring their first



**Above:** Kicker John Kasay (4) is consoled by teammate Kris Mangrum after one of Kasay's three missed field goals. **Opposite Page:** Panthers coach John Fox (left) and backup quarterback Rodney Peete (9) react to an officials' call in the second quarter.



winning season since 1996.

"I just missed the kicks and it's my fault," said Kasay. "Usually when something like this happens you're not doing this anymore — you've moved on to another career. So hopefully I'll keep this to a minimum."

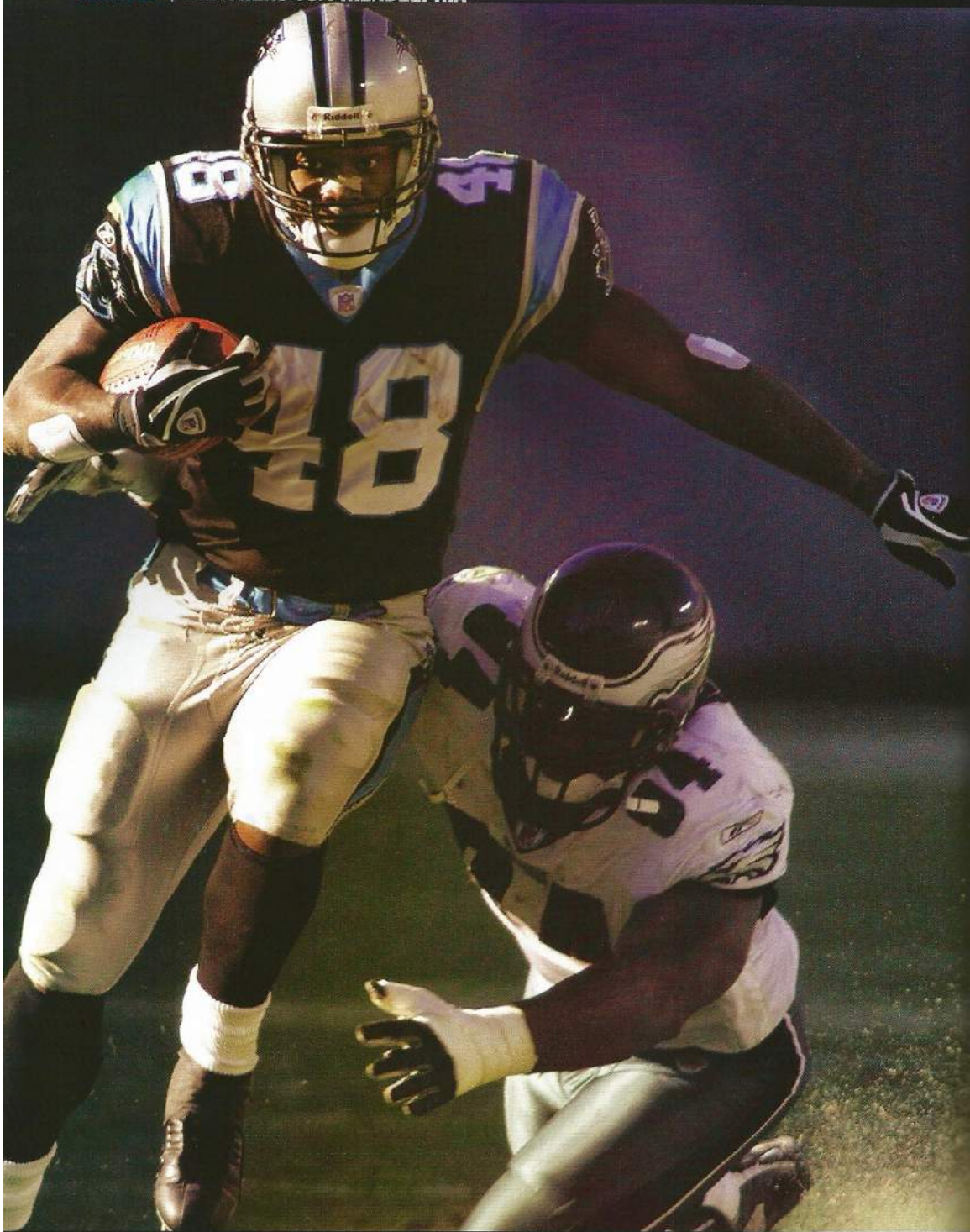
The Panthers refused to place all the blame on Kasay, the only player left from Carolina's inaugural 1995 team. He made a 20-yarder after Rucker's interception, but missed on attempts of 32, 38 and 49 yards.

"John is a guy who has been very reliable for us, and for whatever reason didn't get it done today," coach John Fox said. "I don't think that is the entire reason we lost."

The Panthers also turned over the ball on downs at the end of the first half on the Eagles 8-yard line when they went for it on fourth-and-1 rather than give Kasay another chance.

And Jake Delhomme fumbled on a fourth-quarter

GAME 12 | PANTHERS VS. PHILADELPHIA



sack at the Carolina 11. McNabb put the Eagles ahead 22-10 two plays later when he hooked up with James Thrash, who used a second-effort dive to get into the end zone.

Although Philadelphia continued its turnaround from an 0-2 start — its seven straight victories represent its best single-season streak since 1980 — the Eagles did it without any flash and needed David Akers' four field goals and a 2-yard touchdown run by Duce Staley for the win.

Akers, who made field goals of 35, 48, 38 and 29 yards, empathized with Kasay after the game. The two battled in 1999 for a spot on Carolina's roster.

"Nobody taught me more than John Kasay," he said. "I would have taken him over any kicker in the league coming into today."

**Stephen Davis (48) escapes from Philadelphia Eagles' N.D. Kalu (94) during the first half. Davis finished with 115 yards rushing on 23 carries.**

Despite the miscues, the Panthers still had opportunities.

Delhomme threw a 23-yard touchdown pass to Muhsin Muhammad, and although Kasay missed the extra point, it cut the Eagles' lead to 22-16 with 6:42 to play.

Carolina held on defense, but Delhomme threw two incompletions and Steve Smith was called for offensive pass interference to force the Panthers to punt.

They still had one last chance to get the ball back, needing to hold on third-and-8 at the Eagles 45. But McNabb eluded several defenders in a collapsing pocket to launch a 29-yard completion to Chad Lewis that set up Akers' final field goal.

"Chad had to win versus man-to-man coverage and he did that," coach Andy Reid said. "Donovan trusted him and he went up and, heck, that was a big play. It kind of sealed things."

— *By The Associated Press*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | NOVEMBER 30, 2003

<b>Philadelphia</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>16</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 9:35, John Kasay kicks 20-yard field goal

**PHI** 4:15, Duce Staley runs to the left for 2-yard TD (David Akers kick)

#### 2nd Quarter

**PHI** 3:20, David Akers kicks 35-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**PHI** 7:25, David Akers kicks 48-yard field goal

**CAR** 3:08, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith to the left for 24-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**PHI** 13:00, David Akers kicks 38-yard field goal

**PHI** 12:15, Donovan McNabb passes to James Thrash to the right for 10-yard TD (2-point attempt failed, Donovan McNabb pass to Chad Lewis)

**CAR** 6:50, Jake Delhomme passes to Muhsin Muhammad to the left for 23-yard TD (John Kasay kick failed)

**PHI** 0:29, David Akers kicks 29-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	PHI	CAR
First Downs	17	19
Rushes-Yards	28-124	29-136
Passing Yards	159	200
Comp-Att-Int	18-26-1	18-29-0
Punts-Avg.	3-49.3	3-46.7
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-1
Penalties-Yards	4-35	9-70
Time of Possession	29:54	30:06

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Philadelphia: McNabb 18-26-182-1.

Carolina: Delhomme 18-29-216-2.

**Rushing** — Philadelphia: Westbrook 12-64, Buckhalter 6-30, Staley 8-24, McNabb 2-6. Carolina: Davis 23-115, Delhomme 3-13, Goings 1-8, Smart 1-2, Smith 1-(-2).

**Receiving** — Philadelphia: Mitchell 3-40, Westbrook 5-32, Lewis 1-29, Thrash, 3-27, Pinkston 1-15, Smith 1-15, Ritchie 2-9, Staley 1-8, Lewis 1-7. Carolina: Smith 5-80, Muhammad 6-79, Proehl 2-24, Goings 2-19, Wiggins 1-8, Smart 1-5, Seidman 1-1.

**Attendance** — 72,977

# For Panthers' Morgan, Pen Is Mightier

BY VIV BERNSTEIN  
*The New York Times*  
Published: January 27, 2004

**E**very season, Carolina Panthers linebacker Dan Morgan keeps a notebook and writes down all the goals he wants to reach.

Some are impossible, some are laughable.

In 2000, his senior season at the University of Miami, Morgan wrote that he wanted to win the Butkus, Nagurski, Bednarik and Maxwell awards, and the Heisman Trophy. As if linebackers win the Heisman. Still, Morgan went three for five, becoming the first player to win all three defensive awards in one season: the Butkus for best linebacker, and the Nagurski and Bednarik for top defensive player.

So what did he write in his little notebook this season? Super Bowl.

Morgan was not prescient. He wrote the same thing after he was drafted in the first round by the Panthers in 2001, his rookie season. The Panthers set a record for the longest losing streak in one season (15 games) and finished 1-15.

The Super Bowl seemed almost equally unattainable this season after the Panthers finished 7-9 in 2002 and out of the playoffs for the sixth season in a row. Yet there they are, preparing to face the New England Patriots on Sunday in Super Bowl XXXVIII at Reliant Stadium in Houston.

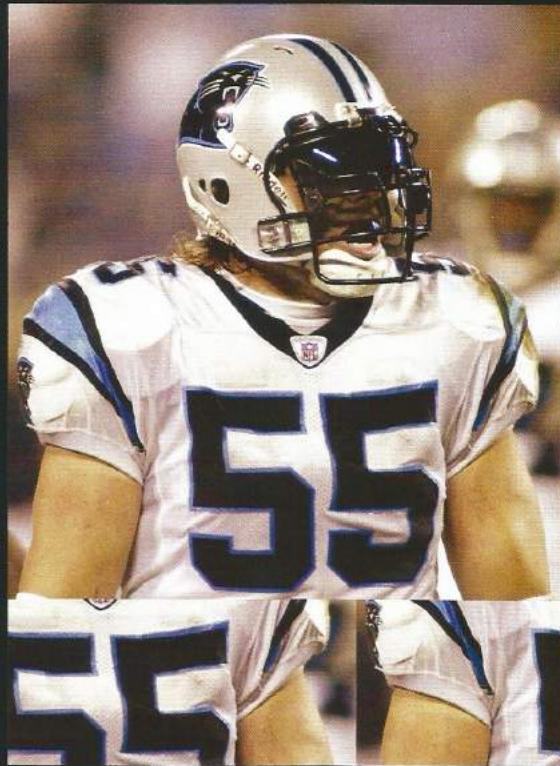
Morgan has plenty to do with that. He leads the Panthers with 27 tackles in the post-

season and had a crucial interception against Philadelphia on Jan. 18 to seal a 14-3 victory in the National Football Conference championship game.

"This defense was built around the middle linebackers," Panthers safety Mike Minter said. "That's why he's so important. And he can play. It's not like he's a guy we just stuck in there. He's fast, he's strong, he's physical, he's smart. He can make plays on the run and the pass. That's what makes him so important to us."

That is also what makes his frequent injuries so frustrating to Morgan and the Panthers.

Morgan has been in and out of the lineup in his three



**Panthers linebacker Dan Morgan is the key tackler on the Carolina defense.**

years with the Panthers, playing 30 out of 48 games. This season, he missed five starts and parts of three other games because of various injuries, including a pulled hamstring and a concussion.

Morgan has often been his own worst enemy. He sometimes practices too hard for his own good.

"He was hurting himself," defensive lineman Brentson Buckner said. "He was hitting people, hurting himself, hurting other people."

Morgan's toughness comes from his father, Dan Sr., who was a semipro football player in Pennsylvania, a commercial roofer in Philadelphia and later a bodyguard for Dan Marino when he was the Dolphins' quarterback.

"I used to go up on the roof with him probably every weekend," Morgan said. "I had Little League games on Saturdays and I would go up on the roof with him on Saturday afternoon before our games and do roofing with him and then play that same day."



"He just taught me to be a tough guy, work hard for what you've got to do. It paid off."

When Morgan's father hurt his back and could no longer work as a roofer, he moved the family to Miami and met quarterback Don Majkowski during physical rehabilitation. That is how Dan Sr. eventually was introduced to Marino. The two worked together for eight years, Dan Jr. learning all about the N.F.L. years before he would join the league.

"As a kid you sit back and you never got to see the bad part of football with injuries and stuff like that," Morgan said. "But as I got to know Dan Marino and Don Majkowski, you can see the negative side of football. I think that's the big thing that you see."

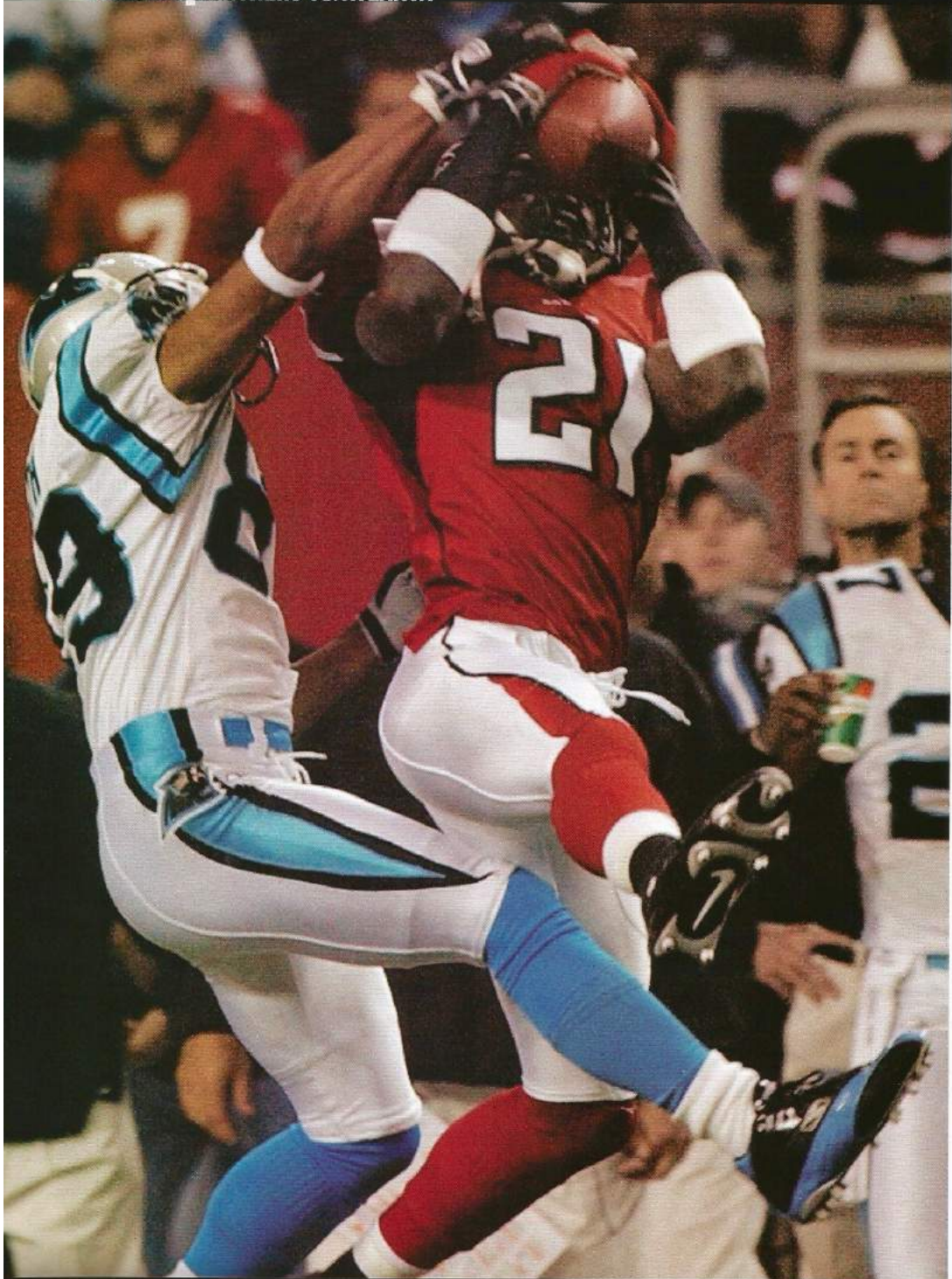
That was not going to happen to Morgan, though. He missed one game in high school, none in four years at Miami. When the Panthers drafted him in 2001, no one figured he would become injury prone.

"We just had to talk to him," said Buckner of Morgan's penchant for physical practices. "He knows it. It was upsetting him he was getting hurt all the time. The game is played on Sunday. You've just got to calm down. It's almost to the point where you have to make him leave the practice field. The other coaches get him off because he's going to go 100 miles an hour. It was a part of him growing. Now he understands that."

With Morgan in the lineup, the Panthers allowed an average of 271.5 yards a game and 80.4 rushing yards a game during the regular season. Without Morgan, the Panthers gave up 325.6 yards a game over all and 143.4 on the ground.

Morgan has been healthy for five games in a row now, and it is no coincidence the Panthers' defense is playing as well as it has all year. Against Philadelphia, Morgan had 13 tackles, 3 passes defended and an interception of Koy Detmer in the fourth quarter that sealed the Panthers' victory and their first trip to the Super Bowl.

"You just want to go out there," Morgan said. "I missed a lot this year. You want to go out there and you want to play hard and you just want to kill people out there."





# Panthers' Losing Streak Extended to 3

**M**ichael Vick rolled around left end, looking as though he was about to run out of bounds. Then — suddenly — he cut back across the width of the field, leaving everyone in his wake.

Forty-three yards later, Vick finally went down.

Welcome back, Michael.

Vick rushed for 141 yards in his first start of the season and Kevin Mathis scored on a 32-yard interception return in overtime, leading the Atlanta Falcons past the Carolina Panthers 20-14 tonight.

"It was a blast to be back out there," said Vick, who went down in the preseason with a broken right leg. "It feels like we won the Super Bowl."

Vick's rushing total was the third-highest in NFL history by a quarterback. He, of course, sits atop the list with a 173-yard performance at Minnesota last season.

"It's unbelievable what he can do," said embattled Falcons coach Dan Reeves, whose job prospects got a little brighter with Vick at quarterback.

After Deon Grant picked off Vick's pass at the Carolina 2 to deny the Falcons (3-10) a chance to win in regulation, the Panthers (8-5) got the ball first in overtime.



Above: Wide receiver Ricky Proehl (81) dives for extra yardage in the first quarter. Opposite Page: Falcons cornerback Juran Bolden (21) pulls down a first-quarter interception in front of Carolina's Steve Smith.

On third down, Jake Delhomme attempted a pass over the middle. Mathis stepped in front of intended receiver Mushin Muhammad, picked off the ball and headed the other way.

Delhomme attempted to knock Mathis out of bounds at the 1, but Mathis dived into the pylon. After calling off the Falcons' celebration to review the play, referee Bill Carollo ruled Mathis had scored.

The Falcons — and Vick — got to celebrate again, having won their first home game of the season and denying Carolina a chance to clinch the NFC South championship.

Most of the night, it was like Vick had never been away. He ran by and jumped over the Panthers, even showing a feisty streak after being sidelined for 3 1/2 months.

Vick completed 16 of 33 passes for 179 yards, but it was his running that stood out. He averaged 10.1 yards on 14 carries, leaving the Panthers nipping at his heels

or just flailing at air.

"You get everybody downfield and he takes off running," Carolina safety Mike Minter said. "That's what makes him Michael Vick."

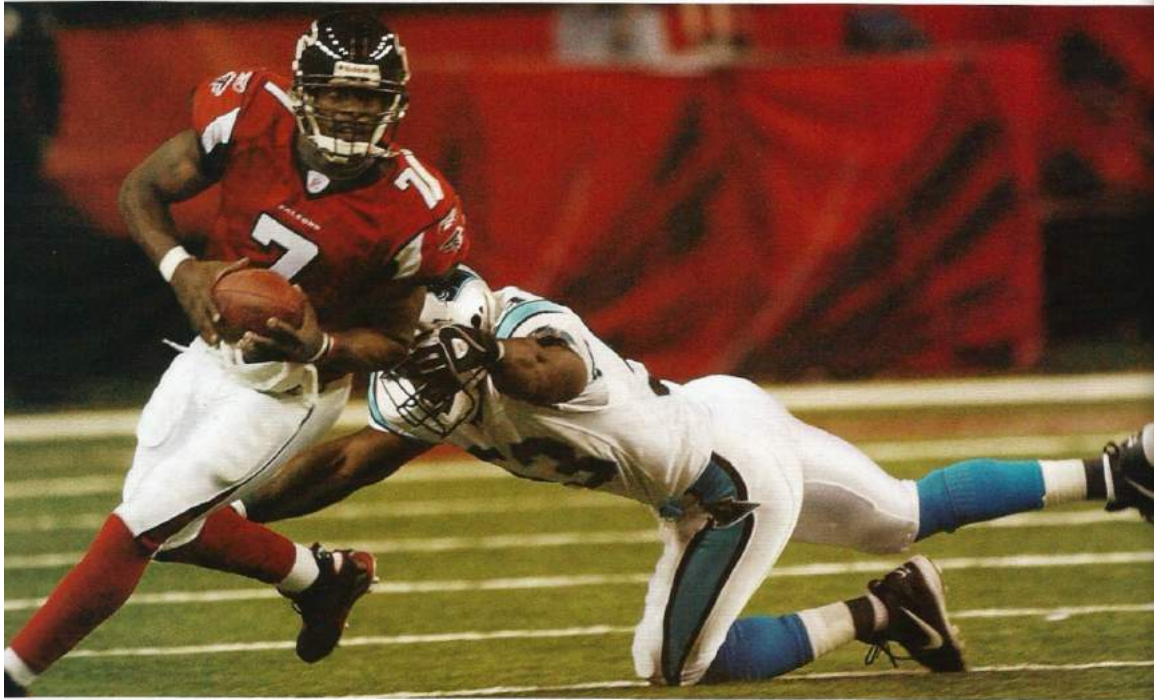
Carolina had a chance to win the second division title in franchise history after New Orleans lost earlier in the day. Instead, the Panthers lost their third in a row.

Carolina had won three overtime games this season, all on the road. But this game belonged to Vick, whose first start created more excitement than the Falcons have generated all season.

Trailing 14-7 in the fourth quarter, Vick took matters into his own hands. He rolled left on a quarterback sweep, cut all the way across the field and turned on the speed for a 43-yard run to the Carolina 13.

It was a play that might have worked in a video game or one of those farfetched commercials. Only with Vick, it seems anything is possible.

"When the guy runs around like that, what can you



Atlanta quarterback Michael Vick (7) eludes Panthers linebacker Greg Favors (53) as he scrambles and then completes a pass in the first quarter.

do?" Minter asked. "It looked like the play was dead, and all of a sudden he was on the other side of the field."

Then things turned a little ugly. Vick passed to Justin Griffith, with the ball coming loose after the whistle blew. Vick scooped it up just in case, only to be taken out on a hard hit by 335-pound tackle Kris Jenkins.

Vick hopped off the turf and went after Jenkins, sparking a brief scuffle. Order was restored, and Vick went back to work. On second-and-goal from the 1, he fooled the Panthers with a great play fake, took off around left end and leaped into the end zone with 8:17 remaining.

"Me and him have been going at it since the first game when I didn't play," Vick said, referring to a 23-3 loss at Carolina. "It wasn't dirty. It was just football."

Later, the Falcons moved into field-goal range on Vick's two passes to Alge Crumpler passes, but Jay Feely already had missed two kicks, so Atlanta gambled with a pass.

Vick underthrew Crumpler and Grant picked it off at the Carolina 2 with six seconds remaining. That was about the only low point for the quarterback, who missed the first 11 games.

Vick played two series last week in a 17-13 loss to Houston, but this was his coming-out.

During pregame introductions, Vick was last to emerge from the tunnel, thumping his chest as he trotted on the field. The Atlanta fans, who had seen their team lose its first six home games, waved towels and let out their loudest roar in weeks. Keeping with the theme, singer LeAnn Rimes wore a No. 7 jersey while performing the national anthem.

The teams traded touchdowns in the second quarter. T.J. Duckett put the Falcons ahead on a 9-yard run, but the Panthers countered with Delhomme throwing a 16-yard scoring pass to Jermaine Wiggins.

The backup tight end celebrated by placing the ball on the turf, then delivering an elbow smash like he was a professional wrestler.

Stephen Davis put the Panthers ahead for the first time, bulling over from the 1 with 4 1/2 minutes left in the third quarter.

Delhomme was 13-of-25 for 153 yards. The Falcons held Davis to 81 yards on 24 carries.

— By The Associated Press

ATLANTA | DECEMBER 7, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 2nd Quarter

**ATL** 12:02, T.J. Duckett runs to the right for 9-yard TD (Jay Feely kick)

**CAR** 3:24, Jake Delhomme passes to Jermaine Wiggins down the middle for 16-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 4:35, Stephen Davis runs up the middle for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**ATL** 8:24, Michael Vick runs to the left for 1-yard TD (Jay Feely kick)

#### Overtime

**ATL** 13:41, Jake Delhomme throws an interception down the middle, 32-yard return for TD by Kevin Mathis

### Team Stats

	CAR	ATL
First Downs	13	24
Rushes-Yards	33-90	37-224
Passing Yards	141	156
Comp-Att-Int	13-25-2	16-34-1
Punts-Avg.	8-42.1	4-40.5
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	2-1
Penalties	10-76	7-42
Time of Possession	28:37	32:52

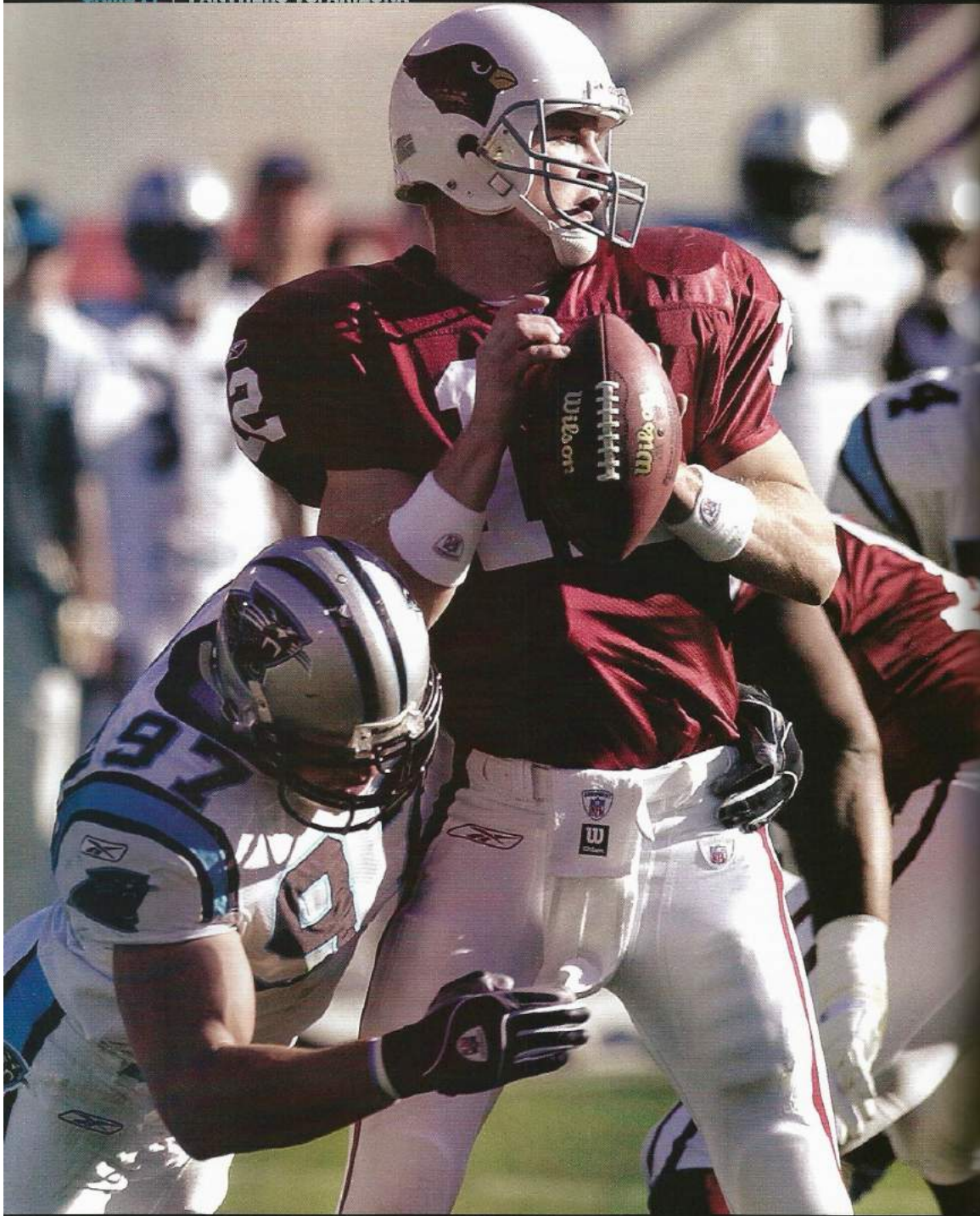
### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 13-25-153-1. Atlanta: Vick 16-33-179-0, Mohr 0-1-0-0.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 24-81, Foster 3-6, Hoover 1-3, Delhomme 5-0. Atlanta: Vick 14-141, Duckett 17-59, Griffith 6-24.

**Receiving** - Carolina: Smith 7-66, Muhammad 3-53, Wiggins 1-16, Hankton 1-15, Foster 1-3. Atlanta: Price 4-57, Crumpler 5-57, Finneran 3-47, Griffith 3-11, Duckett 1-7.

**Attendance** — 70,079



# Kasay Boots Winner in Final Seconds

**J**ohn Kasay was part of the early glory of the Carolina Panthers when they made the playoffs in just their second season in 1996. He was still around for the misery of a 1-15 record in 2001.

Kasay brought Carolina back to the postseason Sunday with a 49-yard field goal four seconds from the finish to give the Panthers a 20-17 victory over the Arizona Cardinals and the NFC South title.

"To watch how fast we rose, and then the battles we have had over the year to try to get back to this spot," Kasay said, "this is a special day."

Carolina (9-5) snapped a three-game losing streak to earn its second playoff berth.

"It's just been a bunch of good people doing their job well," Coach John Fox said. "We haven't arrived yet, but we've sure made a lot of progress."

As usual, the Panthers won the hard way.

Eight of Carolina's victories have come in the final two minutes or in overtime. Carolina tied an NFL record with its seventh win by three points or less this season — the Cardinals did it in 1998.

"Are we playing our best football right now? Probably not," Carolina quarterback Jake Delhomme said. "But we still got the win, and that's an encouraging sign."

Arizona's Neil Rackers, who missed a 35-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter, kicked a 44-yarder with 1:15 to play to tie it at 17-all.

Delhomme, who completed 20 of 32 passes for 236 yards, connected with Steve Smith five times for 41 yards in a 13-play, 44-yard drive to set up the winning field goal.

"We just saw what we had to work with and made the plays when we needed to," Smith said. "They were play-

ing a lot of off coverage. They didn't want to get beat deep."

The Cardinals tried, but failed, to get pressure on Delhomme as the Panthers drove for the winning score.

"On that drive we blitzed six out of nine times," Arizona coach Dave McGinnis said. "We weren't going to let him just sit back there, but we didn't make the plays."

Second-year quarterback Josh McCown, in his first NFL start, had his first pass returned 35 yards by Mike Minter for a touchdown, then regrouped to direct two time-consuming TD drives and Arizona (3-11) led 14-7 at the half.

"I tell you what, I like him," Minter said of McCown. "I told him after the game he's going to be a good quarterback. Why? Because he doesn't let bad things get him down. He came back and put two drives together with his legs and his arms. That shows me a lot about his character."

McCown scored on a 16-yard run and Emmitt Smith ran 4 yards for his first home touchdown of the season for Arizona, which lost its sixth in a row. McCown had not played well in the brief times he had been on the field as a backup, but he was poised throughout this one.

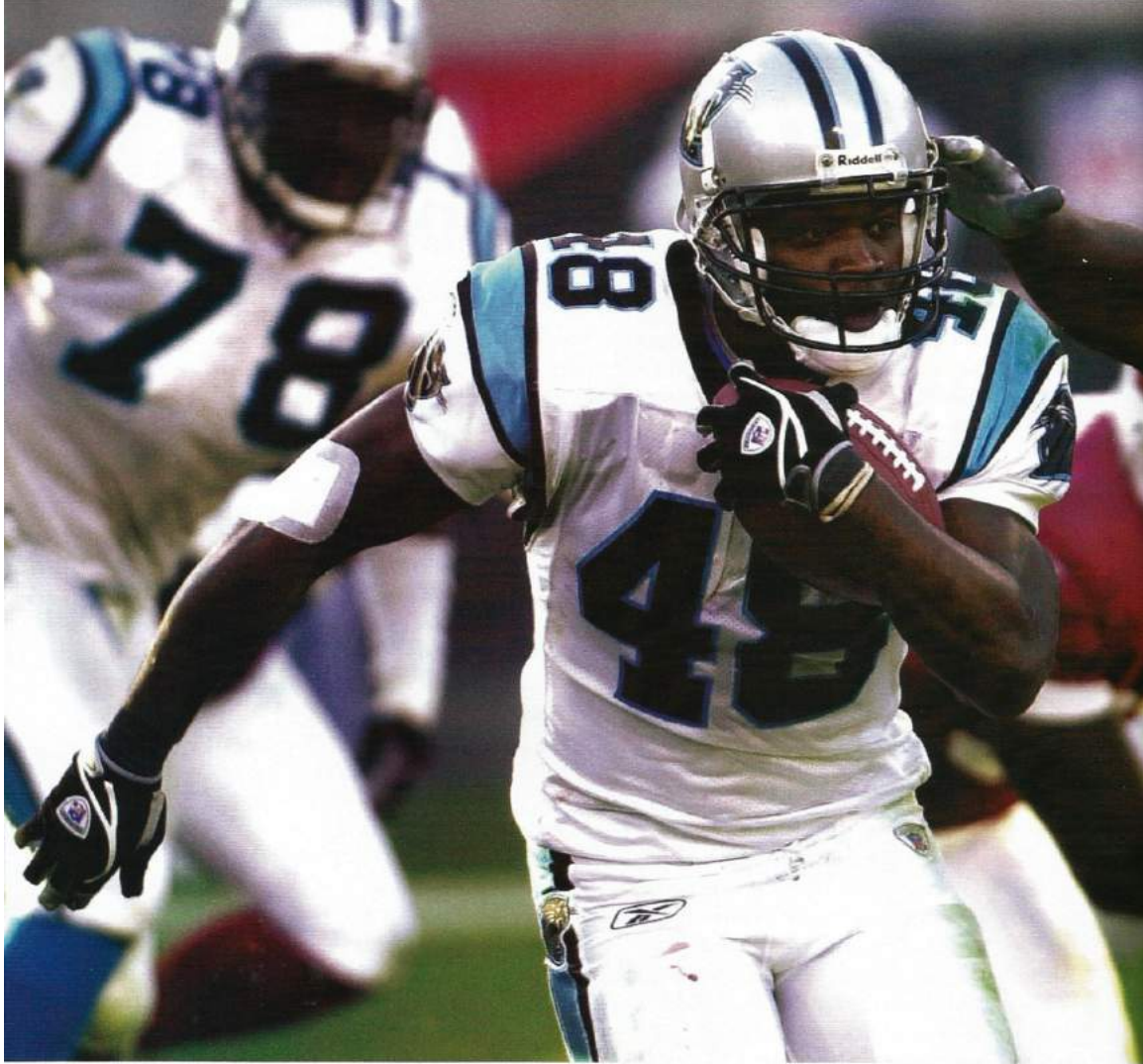
"I hope that I showed that I managed the game and played well enough that people can have confidence in me," McCown said. "But the bottom line is you've got to win. That's my goal. That's what I want to change."

Delhomme moved the Panthers 93 yards in nine plays, capped by a 31-yard touchdown pass to DeShaun Foster, to put Carolina up 17-14 with 11:29 to go.

Initially, officials ruled he was stopped just outside the goal line. But Fox challenged, and after a review it was ruled a touchdown.

McCown, starting in place of Jeff Blake, completed

**Carolina's Kemp Rasmussen sacks Cardinals quarterback Josh McCown (12) during the first quarter.**



**Stephen Davis (48) sprints away from Arizona defender Gerald Hayes during the fourth quarter.**

14 of 25 for 172 yards with that one costly one interception.

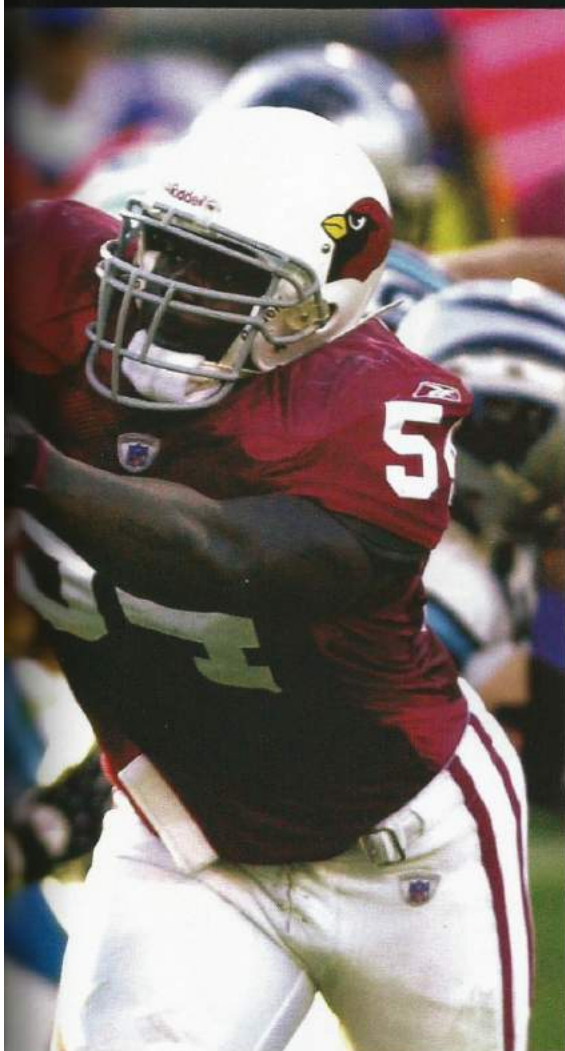
He came back to direct an 80-yard, 10-play TD drive and accounted for the final 31 yards in two plays.

On third-and-12 from the Carolina 31, McCown gained 15 on a quarterback draw, then rolled right and scored on the next play to tie it at 7-7 with 37 seconds left in the first quarter.

After Delhomme fumbled the ball away on a hit by

Fred Wakefield, Arizona went 59 yards in 10 plays, consuming 7:02. Smith's second touchdown put the Cardinals up 14-7 with 6:04 left in the half.

Carolina drove to the Arizona 5, but couldn't punch it in, and Kasay's 21-yard field goal cut the lead to 14-10 with 6:04 left in the third quarter. Notes: Carolina lost starting center Jeff Mitchell with a groin pull midway through the third quarter. ... Security personnel had to fetch Arizona's Scott Player from the locker



room to punt in the final seconds of the first half after he had left the field, thinking the half was over. ... Kasay missed three field goals and an extra point two weeks ago in a loss to Philadelphia. ... There were 23,217 tickets distributed but there weren't that many at the game in 73,000-seat Sun Devil Stadium.

— *By The Associated Press*

TEMPE, ARIZ. | DECEMBER 14, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Arizona</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>17</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 14:15, Josh McCown throws an interception to the left, 35-yard return by Mike Minter (John Kasay kick)

**ARI** 1:33, Josh McCown runs to the right for 16 yards (Neil Rackers kick)

#### 2nd Quarter

**ARI** 6:54, Emmitt Smith runs up the middle for 4-yard TD (Neil Rackers kick)

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 6:04, John Kasay kicks 21-yard field goal

#### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 11:29, Jake Delhomme passes to DeShaun Foster to the right for 31-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**ARI** 1:09, Neil Rackers kicks 44-yard field goal

**CAR** 0:08, John Kasay kicks 49-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	CAR	ARI
First Downs	17	23
Rushes-Yards	18-67	40-170
Passing Yards	231	147
Comp-Att-Int	20-32-1	14-25-1
Punts-Avg.	4-42.5	4-37.8
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	2-1
Penalties-Yards	4-35	5-50
Time of Possession	22:06	37:54

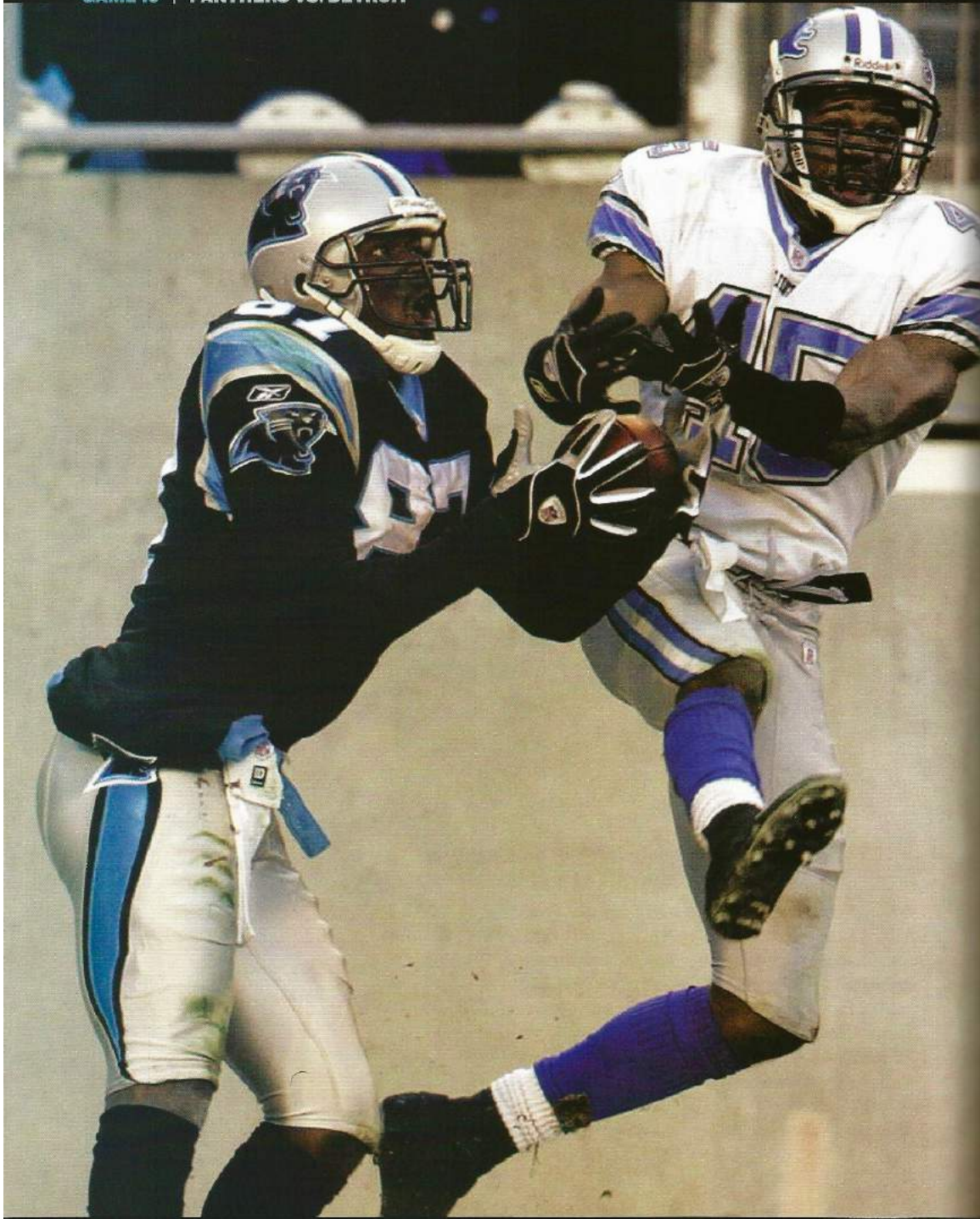
### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 20-32-236-1. Arizona: McCown 14-25-172-0.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 13-48, Foster 4-16, Delhomme 1-3. Arizona: Shipp 23-89, McCown 7-47, Smith 9-23, Boldin 1-11.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Smith 9-99, Foster 3-50, Davis 3-34, Mangrum 2-30, Muhammad 1-11, Goings 1-8, Hoover 1-4. Arizona: Boldin 7-73, Jones 2-35, Gilmore 2-24, Poole 2-22, Johnson 1-18.

**Attendance** — 23,217





# Carolina Whips Lions to Take Division Crown

**T**he playoff-bound Carolina Panthers had to make a choice: Rest some of their ailing starters or play them in pursuit a momentum-building win. The lowly Detroit Lions made it an easy decision.

Carolina rested five starters, but still managed one of its easiest wins of the year, beating Detroit 20-14 today and sending the Lions into NFL infamy with their 24th consecutive road loss.

"You have to operate in the present," said Carolina coach John Fox. "The idea of building momentum going into the playoffs was critical, but I really don't think any of the five guys would have been ready to play."

Carolina's fill-ins did just fine, holding Detroit in check as the Lions moved past the 1981-84 Houston Oilers for most successive road losses. The Lions have not won away from home since Dec. 17, 2000.

"It eats me alive and makes me absolutely sick to my stomach to think about it," said Lions guard Ray Brown. "Everybody on the team is part of the streak and it's nothing to be proud of."

The Lions (4-11) had just eight first downs and 106 yards of total offense. Quarterback Joey Harrington only played until midway through the second quarter before Mike McMahon replaced him, but the two combined to go 7-of-19 for 53 yards.

"There's a lot of searching for answers, a lot of things to fix and some things to build on," said first-year coach Steve Mariucci. "These guys care a lot and are determined to break that streak."

Jake Delhomme threw for two touchdowns and

John Kasay kicked a pair of field goals to lead the Panthers (10-5) to the leisurely victory they so desperately needed.



**Above:** Dan Morgan (55) and Greg Favors (53) stop Detroit's Artose Pinner. **Opposite Page:** Muhsin Muhammad (87) pulls in a pass in the first quarter.

Despite winning its first division title in seven years, very few of Carolina's wins came easily. Seven of the Panthers' 10 victories this year are by three or fewer points and eight came in the final two minutes or overtime.

And as much as Carolina needs momentum-building wins to close out the regular season, allowing ailing players time to heal is also a priority.

So running back Stephen Davis, center Jeff Mitchell, defensive tackle Brentson Buckner, defensive end Mike Rucker and cornerback Terry Cousin all watched from the sideline in street clothes.

But their replacements did fine. DeShaun Foster ran for 76 yards and had six catches for 38 yards, including a 10-yard touchdown pass from Delhomme. Rookie Bruce Nelson's first career start at center was without incident.

Detroit was nearly shut out, but two big plays made the final score closer than then game actually was.

Reggie Swinton returned a punt 89 yards for a touchdown to cut Carolina's lead to 20-7 with 12:02 left.

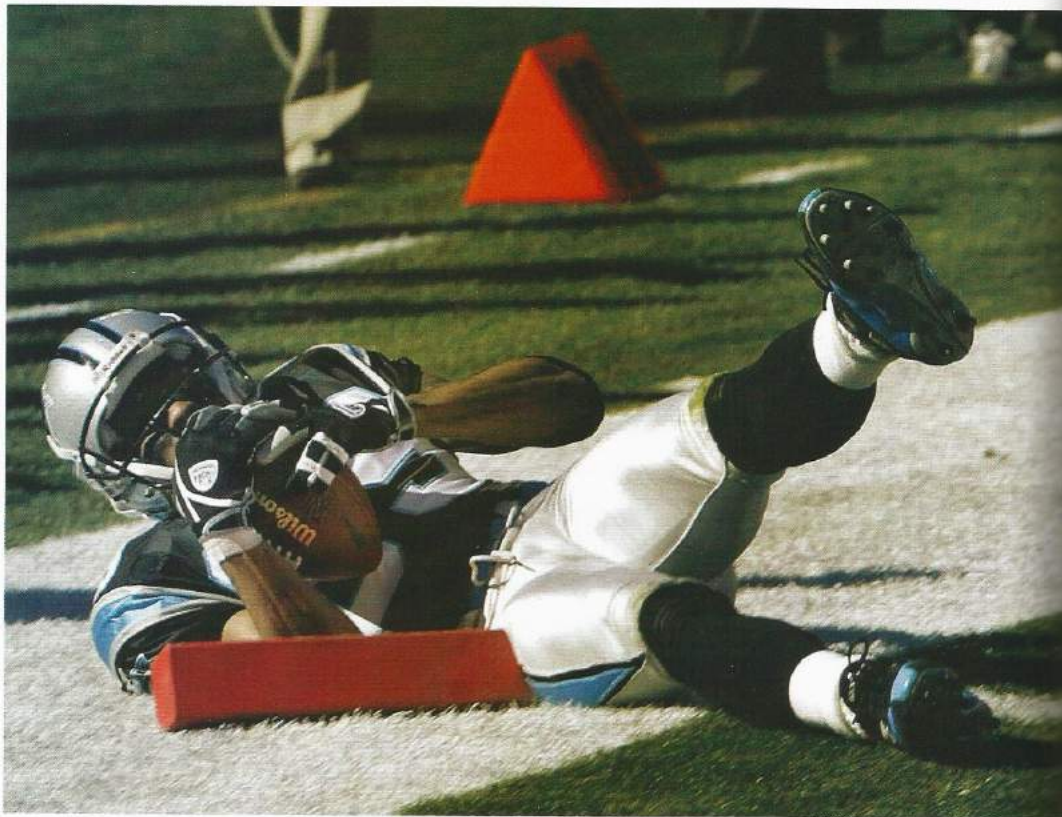
Then Foster fumbled on a late catch and Boss Bailey scooped it up and returned it 62 yards for a touchdown.

The Panthers didn't aggressively try to stop Bailey's return, thinking Foster's drop shouldn't have been ruled a fumble. Carolina challenged, but the call was upheld and the Lions cut it to 20-14 with 3:44 to play.

"That showed a lot about this team," said cornerback Dre' Bly. "We could have easily folded, but we didn't."

Still, those were the lone bright spots on a dismal offensive day for Detroit.

McMahon did put together a decent second-quarter



drive, using an 11-yard scramble to move the Lions to the Carolina 24. But his next pass sailed straight into Carolina safety Mike Minter's hands to end the drive.

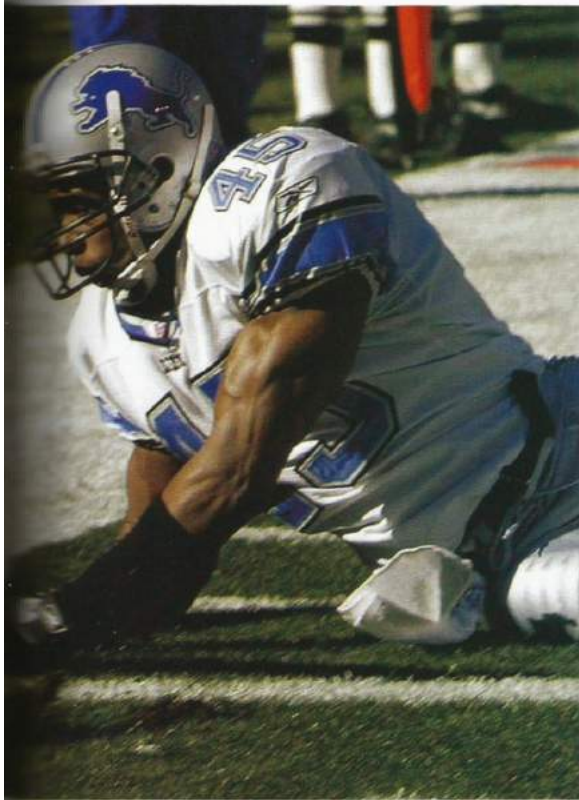
The Panthers used the interception to set up Kasay's 42-yard field goal for a 17-0 lead.

Kasay, spotty the past six or so weeks, added a 44-yarder in the third quarter that made it 20-0.

"We needed a game that didn't come down to the wire," defensive tackle Kris Jenkins said. "Although the final score doesn't indicate it, we played pretty well and got ourselves in position to close out the season strong."

— By The Associated Press

Steve Smith (89) falls out of bounds after crossing the goal line for a 20-yard TD in the first quarter.



CHARLOTTE, N.C. | DECEMBER 21, 2003

<b>Detroit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>20</b>

**Scoring Summary**

**1st Quarter**

**CAR** 10:40, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith to the right for 20-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**2nd Quarter**

**CAR** 8:11, Jake Delhomme passes to DeShaun Foster to the left for 10-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**CAR** 2:00, John Kasay kicks 42-yard field goal

**3rd Quarter**

**CAR** 7:58, John Kasay kicks 44-yard field goal

**4th Quarter**

**DET** 12:19, Reggie Swinton 89-yard punt return for TD (Jason Hanson kick)

**DET** 4:00, DeShaun Foster fumbles, recovered by Boss Bailey (DET), 62-yard return for TD (Jason Hanson kick)

**Team Stats**

	<b>DET</b>	<b>CAR</b>
First Downs	8	22
Rushes-Yards	21-53	36-124
Passing Yards	53	260
Comp-Att-Int	7-19-1	29-35-1
Punts-Avg.	8-41.6	3-36.3
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	3-1
Penalties-Yards	7-55	6-35
Time of Possession	21:46	38:14

**Individual Stats**

**Passing** — Detroit: McMahon 4-11-36-0, Harrington 3-8-17-0. Carolina: Delhomme 29-35-260-2.

**Rushing** — Detroit: Pinner 12-22, Bryson 6-17, McMahon 2-14, Schlesinger 1-0. Carolina: Foster 21-76, Smart 9-24, Goings 1-11, Delhomme 3-11, Hoover 1-5, Smith 1-(-3).

**Receiving** — Detroit: Kircus 1-18, Pinner 1-9, Schroeder 1-9, Hakim 2-9, Swinton 1-6, Trejo 1-2. Carolina: Smith 5-81, Muhammad 6-69, Foster 6-38, Proehl 3-27, Dyson 2-15, Hoover 2-11, Goings 2-10, Wiggins 2-6, Smart 1-3.

**Attendance** — 72,835

# Panthers Romp Over Lowly Giants

**T**he Carolina Panthers spoiled Jim Fassel's final game with the Giants and set up a wild-card playoff matchup against former New York coach Bill Parcells.

Jake Delhomme threw two touchdown passes in Carolina's biggest offensive show of the season and former Giants assistant John Fox and the Panthers posted a 37-24 victory today in Jim Fassel's final game after seven seasons in New York.

While Fox is looking forward to Saturday's game against Parcells and his Dallas Cowboys in Carolina, he walked off the field knowing he had sent a good friend home a loser.

"I spent the very first moment with him when he was hired and the very last," said Fox, who hugged Fassel after the game. "I feel proud to have been associated with him. He has a lot to be proud of, as I told him."

The victory was the third straight for the Panthers (11-5) and it set up a rematch with the Cowboys (10-6).

Dallas, which was beaten by New Orleans 13-7 on Sunday, defeated Carolina 24-20 earlier this season in Dallas.

"They beat us the last time and we have to give them credit," Delhomme said. "I'm glad we're playing at

home. It's going to be a battle because they're going to come in ready to play. It's what you play for. Now everything gets speeded up. It's time to go."

The loss was the eighth straight for the Giants (4-12), who started the season with Super Bowl hopes, only to see it turn into a disaster after giving away two games early in the season and then being destroyed by injuries.

Fassel's eyes welled as he looked back on his tenure, which included three postseason appearances, highlighted by a Super Bowl trip in 2001.

"I feel maybe it is a better place than when I came in," Fassel said. "I know a lot of the older players have said that to me and that has stuck with me a lot."

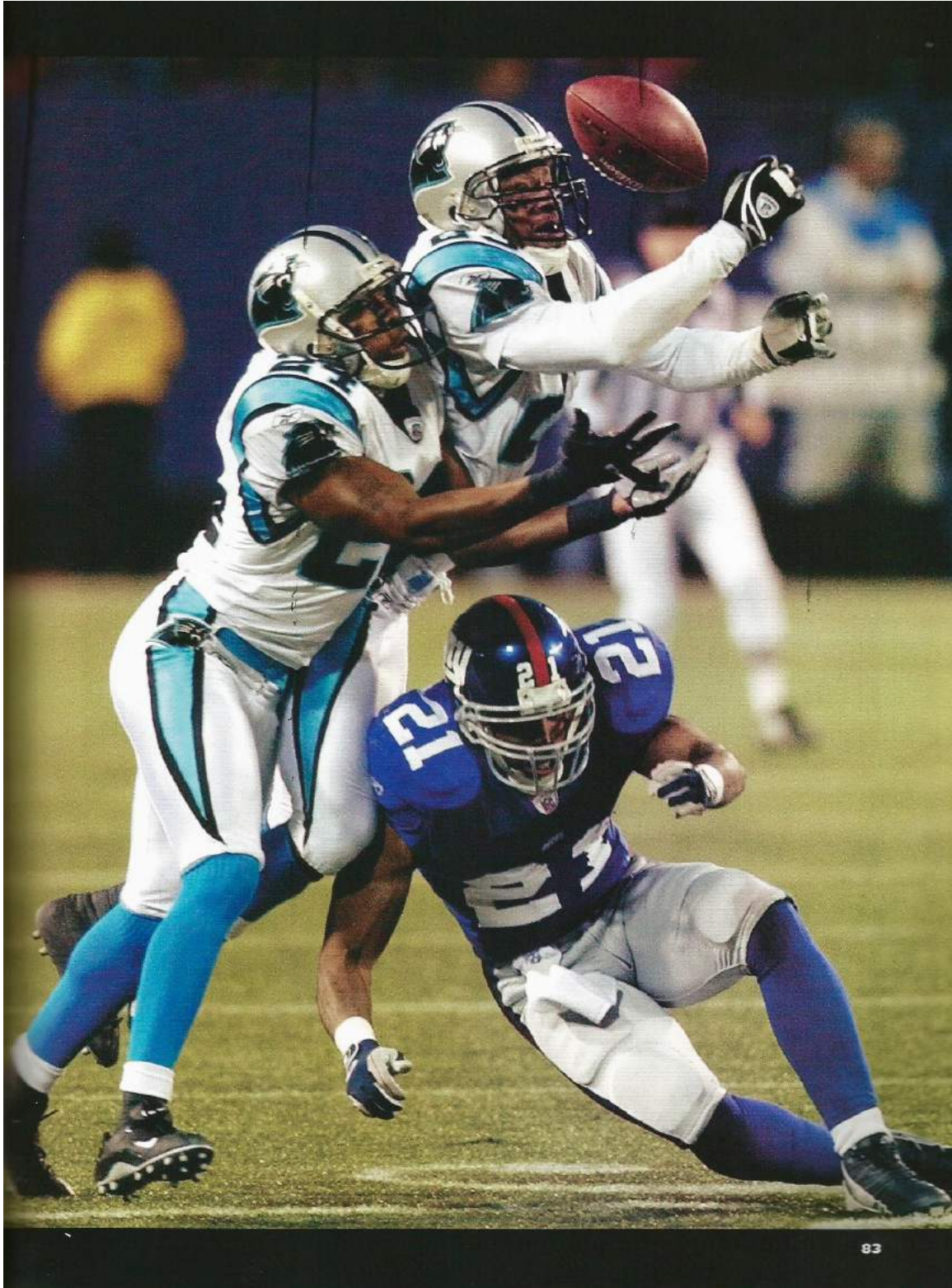
Steve Smith scored on a 53-yard punt return, Ricky Manning Jr. had a 27-yard interception return for a TD and John Kasay kicked field goals of 42, 33 and 34 yards as the Panthers prepped for only their second trip to the postseason by opening a 20-0 lead.

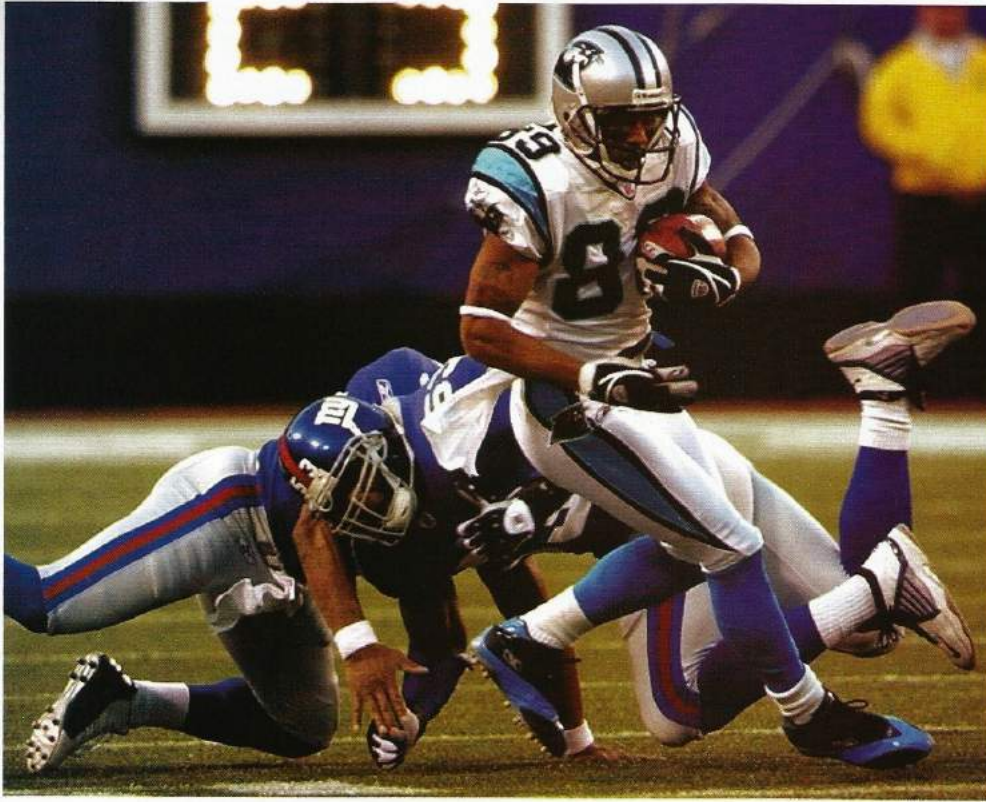
This is the first Giants team to finish the season with eight straight losses since 1966, when the team was 1-12-1.

Fassel, who reached an agreement 10 days ago that allowed him to coach the final two games and then be fired, walked away



**Top:** Giants coach Jim Fassel embraces former assistant John Fox after the game. **Opposite Page:** Panthers cornerbacks Ricky Manning, Jr. (left) and teammate Reggie Howard break up a pass intended for Giants halfback Tiki Barber (21) during the first quarter. Manning intercepted the pass and ran it back 27-yards for a touchdown.





**Panthers punt returner Steve Smith (89) breaks away for a 53-yard TD on a punt return during the first quarter.**

from the Giants with a 58-53-1 mark, the third most coaching wins in franchise history.

The only thing that prevented the Panthers from totally embarrassing Fassel in his finale was Giants defensive end Osi Umenyiora. The rookie blocked two of Todd Sauerbrun's punts to set up short touchdown passes by Jesse Palmer, and he set up a fumble recovery in the end zone by Keith Washington with a sack and forced fumble.

"It's definitely a sad feeling," said Giants receiver Amani Toomer, who caught a 7-yard TD pass. "I wish we could have given him a win. A lot of things happened this year. It's kind of a relief to have it over. We wish it didn't happen the way it did."

The almost 3 1/2-hour game was never in doubt, but

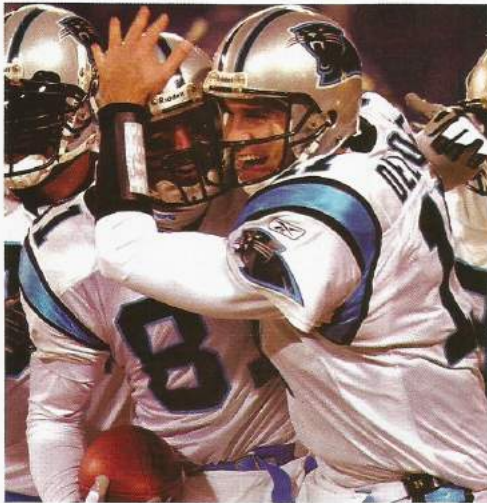
it was a little wild.

Besides the 61 points, referee Bernie Kukar was knocked out of the game in the third quarter after being hit in the back by a Giants player trying to recover one of the blocked punts.

Fassel even pulled out all the stops to try to leave with a win. He got in umpire Bill Schuster's face for an early whistle that prevented New York from recovering a fumble deep in Carolina territory and he challenged two plays on one second-quarter drive.

Even though he got one call reversed, little went right for the likable coach, who also used halfback Brian Mitchell at quarterback for a few plays from the shotgun formation.

Smith's punt return, Manning's interception return



Kasay's two Kasay field goals gave Carolina a 20-0 lead early in the second quarter.

The Giants never got closer than 10 points the rest of the way.

Giants players surrounded Fassel on the sidelines in the closing seconds and hugged him. Escorted by about a dozen camera crews Fassel walked to midfield and hugged Fox after the game.

About 200 fans stood in the end zone and Fassel waved to them walking off the field. They cheered.

— By *The Associated Press*

**Jake Delhomme (17) congratulates receiver Ricky Proehl after his 5-yard TD catch during the fourth quarter.**

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. | DECEMBER 28, 2003

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>NY Giants</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>24</b>

**Scoring Summary**

**1st Quarter**

- CAR** 10:05, Steve Smith 53-yard punt return for TD (John Kasay kick)
- CAR** 2:00, John Kasay kicks 42-yard field goal
- CAR** 1:02, Jesse Palmer throws an interception to the left, 27-yard return by Ricky Manning Jr. for TD (John Kasay kick)

**2nd Quarter**

- CAR** 13:24, John Kasay kicks 33-yard field goal
- NYG** 9:01, Matt Bryant kicks 28-yard field goal
- NYG** 7:55, Jesse Palmer passes to Amani Toomer to the right for 7-yard TD (Matt Bryant kick)
- CAR** 3:48, Jake Delhomme passes to Muhsin Muhammad down the middle for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)
- CAR** 0:04, John Kasay kicks 34-yard field goal

**3rd Quarter**

- NYG** 10:51, Jesse Palmer passes to Visanthe Shiancoe to the right for 1-yard TD (Matt Bryant kick)
- CAR** 4:28, Jake Delhomme passes to Ricky Proehl down the middle for 5-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**4th Quarter**

**NYG** 14:55, Jake Delhomme fumbles, recovered by Keith Washington for TD (NYG) (Matt Bryant kick)

**Team Stats**

	<b>CAR</b>	<b>NYG</b>
First Downs	15	14
Rushes-Yards	34-114	19-76
Passing Yards	137	99
Comp-Att-Int	16-30-1	18-43-4
Punts-Avg.	7-27.6	5-37.6
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-1
Penalties-Yards	8-82	8-45
Time of Possession	34:36	25:54

**Individual Stats**

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 16-30-191-2. NY Giants: Palmer 18-43-110-2.  
**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 11-57, Foster 17-43, Goings 3-17, Delhomme 3-(-3). NY Giants: Barber 9-40, Mitchell 3-19, Levens 7-17.  
**Receiving** — Carolina: Muhammad 5-80, Proehl 5-66, Foster 3-20, Smith 2-16, Goings 1-9. NY Giants: Toomer 4-47, Ponder 2-18, Dinkins 2-16, Tyree 2-12, Levens 1-11, Shiancoe 2-7, Finn 2-2, Barber 3-(-3).  
**Attendance** — 78,130

# Panthers Lineman Is Inspired by a Dying Child's Wish

BY CARL NELSON  
*The New York Times*  
Published: January 30, 2004



**A**n hour or so before the biggest game of his life, Kevin Donnalley will take a moment in the Carolina Panthers' locker room on Sunday to write a name on his wrist tape: Hope Stout.

Donnalley, the Panthers' right guard, has fought in the trenches of the N.F.L. for 13 seasons. He has watched teammates play through an assortment of bone-jarring injuries. But Donnalley said he has never seen a greater example of courage than that of the freckle-faced, 12-year-old Hope Stout from Weddington, N.C.

Donnalley met Hope on the sideline before the Panthers' game against the Tennessee Titans on Oct. 19. Donnalley, whose soft-spokenness belies his 6-foot-5-inch, 310-pound frame, was asked by a friend if he would have his picture taken with her.

Afterward, Donnalley learned she was battling osteosarcoma, a form of bone cancer.

"That day would change my life," said Donnalley, who wears a gold pin with the name Hope.

After Hope learned she had cancer last June, the Make-A-Wish foundation, a group that grants wishes to terminally ill children, visited and asked what her wish would be.

Donnalley said that when Hope learned there were 155 other children on the organization's list, she told the organization, "That's my wish, that their wishes come true."

The Charlotte area Make-A-Wish chapter said it would cost about \$1 million for the 155 wishes to come true. Residents of the Charlotte area responded. The Panthers held fund raisers — a ball autographed by the

**Hope Stout's request inspired the Panthers to lead a \$1.2 million fundraiser for the Charlotte chapter of Make-A-Wish.**





Kevin Donnalley, a friend of Stout's, was one of the leaders to assist the Make-A-Wish's fundraising effort.

team was sold for \$30,000 and the offensive line sold T-shirts of themselves called the "Fat Cats." Elementary children sent in their allowances.

Over \$1.2 million has been raised, Donnalley said. Contributions also include \$15,000 from the Nascar driver Tony Stewart and \$10,000 from the Charlotte Bobcats, an N.B.A. expansion team, according to *The Charlotte Observer*.

Donnalley visited Hope a few times on his own, and on one such trip, he said Hope told him: "I appreciate you coming to visit, but if you can find the time or maybe during the off-season go see the kids in the hospital instead of me because I've got family. I've got two sisters who love me and support me. I have parents who are there for me. A lot of those kids don't. Their parents are working or

can't get there to see them all the time."

On Jan. 3, the Panthers defeated the Dallas Cowboys, 29-10, in the first round of the playoffs.

Hope died the next night.

"She's going to live forever because of her generosity," Donnalley said.

"No matter what guys I've been with — 350-pound guys — and the courage they showed doesn't even compare to the courage that tiny, little 12-year-old girl showed," he said.

The national Make-A-Wish foundation plans to make Hope a national inspiration. A book is being written by children with cancer for children with cancer, including some of Hope's writings.

"Just like her name," Donnalley said, "she gives hope."

# Panthers' Owner Caught Unitas and Talked Back to Halas

BY DAVE ANDERSON

*The New York Times*

Published: February 1, 2004

**J**erry Richardson is the Carolina Panthers' owner and founder, but anybody with a few zillion disposable dollars can buy those titles. He's different because he's the only owner of a National Football League franchise to have also been a player in the league since George Halas, who played for the Chicago Bears in a leather helmet more than 80 years ago.

Long before Richardson, now 67, made the money with Hardee's fast-food restaurants that helped pay the \$170 million expansion fee for the Panthers, he was a rookie wide receiver for the 1959 Baltimore Colts who caught a 12-yard touchdown pass from Johnny Unitas in a 31-16 victory over the Giants in the N.F.L. championship game.

"When we left the huddle, John told me, 'Be alert,' " he recalled Friday. "Raymond Berry was split wide to the left, I was lined up to the left in what is now called the slot. Whenever we practiced that play, John always threw the ball to Raymond on a slant pattern, but this time, when I went out to the left on a little flare pattern, he threw the ball to me."

During that season the 6-foot-3, 185-pound Richardson, who had been drafted in the 13th round out of Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C., caught only 7 passes for 81 yards, but 3 were for touchdowns. In a game against the Bears in Wrigley Field, he also caught the eye of Halas, the growling coach and N.F.L. founder known as Papa Bear.

"I never met George formally," Richardson recalled. "But whenever I was near the Bears' sideline that day, he said things to me because I was a rookie. I said things back to him. We won the game. And since I've owned the Panthers, whenever I see George's daughter, Virginia McCaskey, at league meetings, we laugh about

the discussion I had with her father."

As a rookie, Richardson's salary was \$7,500 and a \$750 signing bonus.

With a raise to \$8,750 in 1960, he caught 15 passes for 171 yards and a touchdown. But when Weeb Ewbank, then the Colts' coach, offered him only \$9,750 in 1961, he balked.

"I thought I deserved \$10,000," he said. "I went to training camp anyway, but when I saw that Weeb wasn't going to come up any higher, I told my wife Rosalind that it was time I decided to do something else. It was the luckiest thing I ever did. If I hadn't left the Colts, I never would have made the money to own the Panthers."

Richardson and Charles Bradshaw, who had been his quarterback at Fayetteville (N.C.) High School, purchased a Hardee's franchise in Spartanburg for \$3,000 and worked it, selling 15-cent hamburgers, French fries and soft drinks.

"One by one, we added more Hardee's franchises," Richardson said. "When we eventually went public, our goal was to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange by the time I was 40, which would be July 1976. And in June of 1976, we were."

Before the Panthers' first season, Richardson set another goal: to get to the Super Bowl within 10 years. They advanced to the 1996 National

Football Conference championship game before losing in Green Bay and deteriorating into also-rans. But at the end of their ninth season, they're in Super Bowl XXXVIII tonight against the New England Patriots.

"I think I have an appreciation for this game unlike any other current owner," he said. "I was in the huddle in the fourth quarter of that 1959 championship game when the Giants were beating us, 9-7. I was in the game when we were ahead, 14-9, and then 21-9 on the touchdown I scored.

There's not a current owner with a memory like that. It's been a blessing for me."

It has also been a blessing for the Panthers players who know that their owner and founder played the game. "You want to come through for a great owner like Jerry Richardson," linebacker Dan Morgan said. "When you talk to him, you know he means business."

But for all his involvement, Richardson doesn't remind his coaches and players that he played the game.

"I try real hard," he said, "not to be all over our players and coaches as they try to get their work done. I'm never tempted to get involved in second-guesses. I can count only five times in our history when I addressed a coach over something that miffed me. I do get involved in conduct issues, but I don't do that at the stadium. They do get to come to my house."

His home is also where Richardson conducted most of the interviews when he, his son Mark (the Panthers' president) and Marty Hurney (the Panthers' general manager) were searching for a head coach after a dismal 1-15 record in 2001.

"We interviewed Tony Dungy, Ted Cottrell, Marvin Lewis and John Fox," he said. "John impressed us right

away with his enthusiasm, his confidence in himself and his plan that was compatible with how we wanted the team to be built."

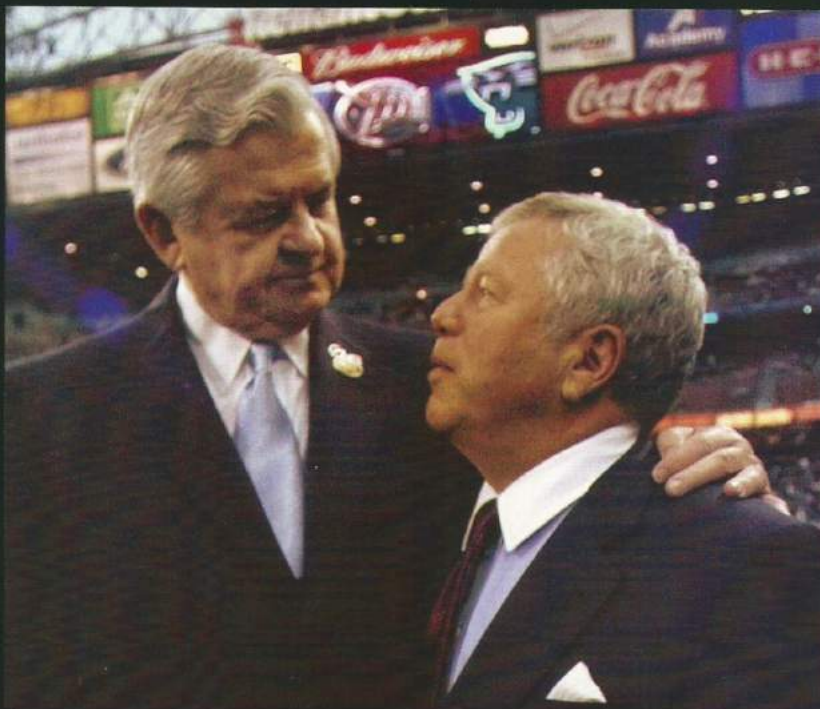
And unlike some nouveau riche N.F.L. owners, Richardson has been compatible with the "32 teams but one league" philosophy of the older owners.

He occasionally confides in Wellington Mara, the Giants' 87-year-old co-owner.

"Jerry's solid," Mara said here Friday. "He knows where he came from and how he got here. Unlike some other owners I won't name who changed their values, he sees the league first. As an owner in a league with 31 other owners, you have to do things differently than you would as an entrepreneur."

Jerry Richardson has always done things differently.

As a 13th-round choice, he talked back to George Halas, the only other N.F.L. owner who also played. He caught a touchdown pass from Johnny Unitas that helped deprive the Giants of a championship. And after walking out on the Colts, he built the Hardee's empire that enabled him to own the Panthers.



**Patriots owner Bob Kraft, right, and Carolina owner Jerry Richardson talk before the kickoff of Super Bowl XXXVIII.**

# Two Diagnoses of Cancer Teach Panthers About Fight

BY VIV BERNSTEIN  
*The New York Times*  
 Published: January 22, 2004

**T**he news came in waves during the Carolina Panthers' training camp last summer, one crashing blow after another. The starting linebacker Mark Fields was found to have Hodgkin's disease in mid-August; the linebackers coach Sam Mills found out he had cancer of the small intestine two weeks later.

"When they told us about Mark, you hear cancer and you just automatically think that's it," safety Mike Minter said recently. "Everybody was shocked and devastated at that point. Then a week later, you find out that Sam has cancer, too, and it's just unbelievable."

That might have been the end of the Panthers' season even before it began for a team that was preparing to take its first fragile steps toward contention in the N.F.L. Yet here they are, preparing to face the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl on Feb. 1 in Houston, perhaps, in part, because of Fields and Mills.

"Whether it's by coincidence or whatever, the characteristic of Sam and Mark and the characteristic of our team are very similar," General Manager Marty Hurney said Wednesday. "Those two guys are battlers and fighters and two of the most competitive guys. Our team is that type of team this year. We never give up. We never think we're out of it.

We always keep fighting. I think somehow there's a connection."

And there is no doubt a different perspective among the Panthers on what it means to fight.

"When the games get tough, you say, 'That ain't tough,'" Mills told local reporters last month in the only interview he has granted since learning he had cancer. "There's some other things that are tougher than that."

There are few who would be considered tougher than Mills, 44, who has always been the essence of the franchise.

A former linebacker who played in the United States Football League from 1983 to 1985 and the N.F.L. from 1986 to 1997, Mills was a part of the Panthers' expansion team that began here in 1995 and reached the National Football Conference title game a year later.

Mills retired after the 1997 season and the Panthers honored him with a bronze statue that stands outside the east gate at Bank of America Stadium. The inscription: "Sam Mills, Leader and Gentleman." Mills is also in the Panthers' Hall of Honor.

Mills, who grew up in New Jersey and played at Montclair State, has remained on the Panthers' staff through three head coaches, Dom Capers, George Seifert and now John Fox.

"It was hard," the reserve linebacker Lester Towns, who has played under Mills since 2000, said of the cancer diagnosis. "Out of all the linebackers here, I think I've been here the longest. You hear something like that, it was hard for me."



A sign for Carolina linebackers coach Sam Mills and player Mark Fields is shown during the team's season-opener against Jacksonville.

Equally difficult was the loss of Fields, 31, who along with Mills has stayed out of the public eye and has granted few interviews.

Fields was signed as a free agent in March 2002, one of the first acquisitions of the new management team of Hurney and Fox.

Fields spent six seasons with New Orleans and reached the Super Bowl with the St. Louis Rams in the 2001 season.

He had an immediate impact on a Panthers team that ranked 31st in the league in total defense in 2001. Fields led the Panthers in tackles (74) and forced five fumbles last season. He contributed seven and a half sacks along the way. He was part of a defensive unit that finished second over all in the N.F.L.

"Any time you lose a player like Mark, it obviously will affect you out there, especially him being a good friend of ours," linebacker Dan Morgan said. "You have a certain chemistry with players that you play with a lot, so we definitely missed him out there."

Fields and Mills have made it easy for the Panthers to go on this season. Although they are undergoing treatment that keeps them away at times, they have made their presence felt around the team. Mills has been on the sideline for every game this season.

The Panthers, meanwhile, used Fields and Mills as motivation as they won the N.F.C. South and beat Dallas, St. Louis and Philadelphia in the playoffs to earn their first Super Bowl berth.

All the while, under their jerseys, the Panthers have each worn a T-shirt bearing Nos. 51 and 58. Mills wore 51, Fields 58. They have been the inspiration for this season.

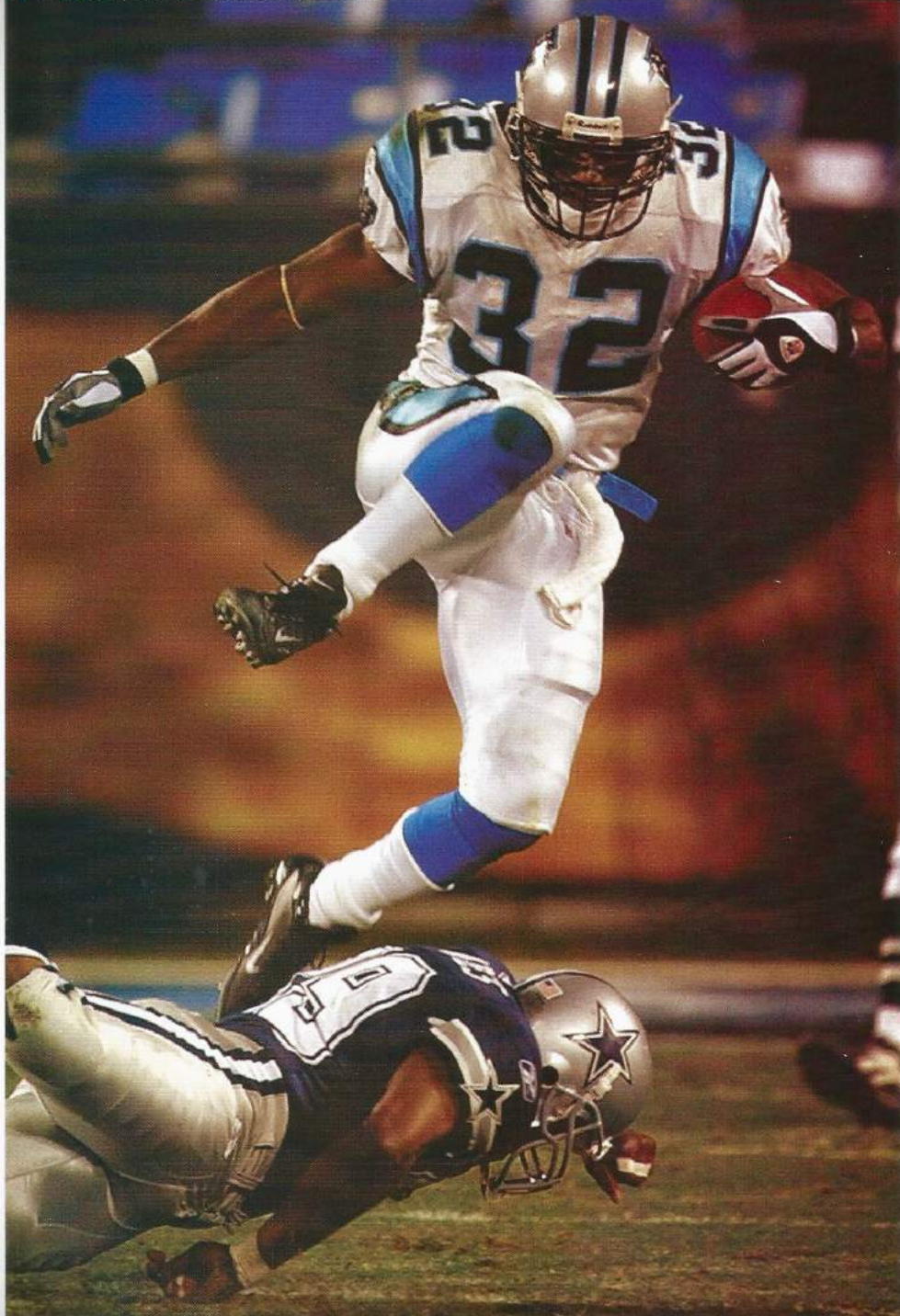
"One of the reasons is, we concentrate more on saying to ourselves, their best medicine is us doing well," linebacker Will Witherspoon said. "You hate to be a player who's missing a game or a coach who's missing a game because he's ill, and then see your team do bad.

"So we took that in our minds and said: 'Look, we're going to carry them as best we can. We're going to do what we can for them, on the field and off.'"

Now the Panthers have carried Mills and Fields all the way to the Super Bowl. Just as Mills and Fields carried them.



Linebackers coach Sam Mills (right) answers a question as Panthers' linebacker Mark Fields listens during a media interview prior to the Super Bowl.



# Panthers Roll Over Dallas in Round 1

**L**ong after Bill Parcells headed to the locker room for the final time this season, the Carolina Panthers returned to the field and ran a slow victory lap around Ericsson Stadium.

The Panthers ended the Parcells-led turnaround in Dallas by picking apart the Cowboys' top-ranked defense in a 29-10 victory in the first round of the NFL playoffs tonight.

The win gave Carolina some respect it thought it was owed, but that the Panthers claimed was lost in the shadows of Parcells returning the Cowboys to the playoffs for the first time in five seasons.

The Panthers celebrated by leaping into the stands

after big plays, embracing the white-towel-waving fans, then taking their slow lap around the stadium to mark their own turnaround.

Remember, this team was 1-15 just two years ago.

"I don't have any idea whose idea that lap was," said quarterback Jake Delhomme. "I just know you have to enjoy these times, because you don't know when they'll happen again."

Delhomme threw for 273 yards and a touchdown, Stephen Davis ran for 104 yards and John Kasay, the last original Panther and the only one who played a role in Carolina's lone previous playoff victory — a 26-17 win over Dallas in 1997 — tied an NFL postseason record with five field goals.



**Left:** Carolina tight end Kris Mangum (86) is up-ended by Dallas Cowboys linebacker Dexter Coakley (92) in the first quarter. **Opposite Page:** Rod Smart (32) hurdles Dallas defender Michael Bates (29) during the third quarter.



**John Fox directed the Panthers to their first playoff victory in 7 seasons.**

It wasn't the way the Cowboys thought this game would go.

"This is abrupt and it doesn't feel good," owner Jerry Jones said. "I didn't want this to end. I just wanted this team to keep playing, keep taking the field."

After three straight 5-11 seasons, Jones lured Parcells out of retirement to lead the Dallas rebuilding effort. This was supposed to be a two-year project, but he took a huge first step by leading the Cowboys into the playoffs in Year 1.

Only there was no playoff glory. Instead, he suffered one of the worst playoff losses of his career. He lost 21-0 to Chicago while with the New York Giants in the playoffs after the 1985 season.

"I'm disappointed," he said. "But I've got to be realistic."

Although the Cowboys came into the game with the league's top-ranked defense, the Panthers made them look downright ordinary.

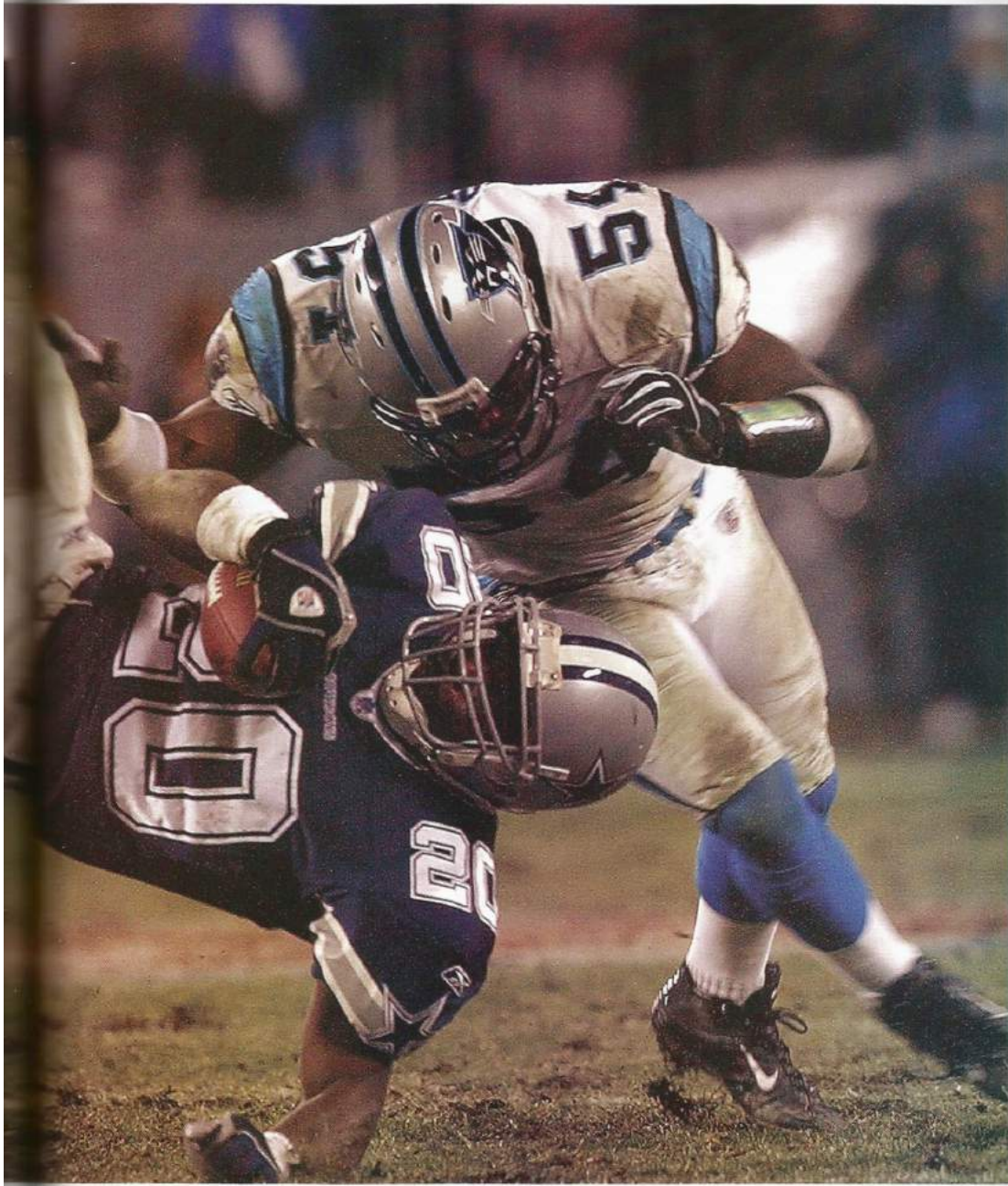
The game was a complete reversal of the regular-season meeting, when the Cowboys stifled Davis and held him to 59 yards rushing. That forced the game into Delhomme's hands, and he failed to deliver in Dallas' 24-20 victory.

But this time Steve Smith had five catches for 135 yards and a 32-yard touchdown and Muhsin Muhammad had four catches for 103 yards. Coupled with

**Dallas halfback Richie Anderson (20) is up-ended by linebacker Will Witherspoon (54) in the fourth quarter.**









Davis' yards on the ground, it marked the first time all season three individual players passed the 100-yard mark against Dallas.

"We executed our game plan, the guys were focused and we knew what we had to do," Davis said.

Meanwhile, Carolina's defense dominated the rematch.

With Parcells watching in frustration from the sideline, the Cowboys could do little. Dallas had zero yards offense in the third quarter, when Delhomme threw his 32-yard touchdown pass to Smith for a 23-3 lead. Against a Dallas team that was 0-5 this season when trailing by seven or more points, Parcells knew his team was in trouble.

Dallas safety Darren Woodson showed the Cowboys' frustration later in the third period, shaking his head in disgust after Davis' 11-yard run. It set up Kasay's fourth field goal, a 32-yarder, that put Carolina up 26-3 with 12:45 left.

The Cowboys didn't give up, though. Quincy Carter put together a solid fourth-quarter drive and capped it with a 9-yard touchdown run with 7:36 to play.

But any chance of another scoring march ended when he was intercepted by Julius Peppers, who returned it 34 yards to the Dallas 11. Peppers then hopped back and sprinted through the end zone, leaping into the stands and into the arms of the white-towel waving Carolina fans.

It set up Kasay's 34-yard field goal for a 29-10 lead. A downright blowout by Carolina's standards.

The Panthers made a habit this season of winning the close ones. Delhomme led them to seven fourth-quarter or overtime victories and their average margin of victory was just 5.8 points.

The Panthers are the second team to win a playoff game with no penalties and no turnovers; Pittsburgh did so in the 1976 Super Bowl.

"That is what coach (John) Fox preaches," said defensive tackle Brentson Buckner. "Play tough, smart football and you can get it done. That's what worked against a great coach tonight in Parcells and a good team."

— *By The Associated Press*

**Panthers receiver Ricky Proehl pulls down a pass from Jake Delhomme in the first half.**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | JANUARY 3, 2004

<b>Dallas</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Carolina</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>29</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 1st Quarter

**CAR** 8:40, John Kasay 18-yard field goal

**CAR** 1:02, John Kasay 38-yard field goal

#### 2nd Quarter

**CAR** 6:10, Steve Davis 23-yard TD run (John Kasay kick)

**DAL** 1:12, Billy Cundiff 37-yard field goal

**CAR** 0:01, John Kasay 19-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 9:44, Steve Smith 32-yard pass from Jake Delhomme (John Kasay kick)

#### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 12:45, John Kasay 32-yard field goal

**DAL** 7:36, Quincy Carter 9-yard TD run (Billy Cundiff kick)

**CAR** 3:12, John Kasay 34-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	DAL	CAR
First Downs	10	16
Rushes-Yards	18-72	34-107
Passing Yards	132	273
Comp-Att-Int	21-36-1	18-29-0
Punts-Avg.	7-36.0	5-48.4
Fumbles	1-1	1-0
Penalties	2-11	0-0
Time of Possession	25:37	34:23

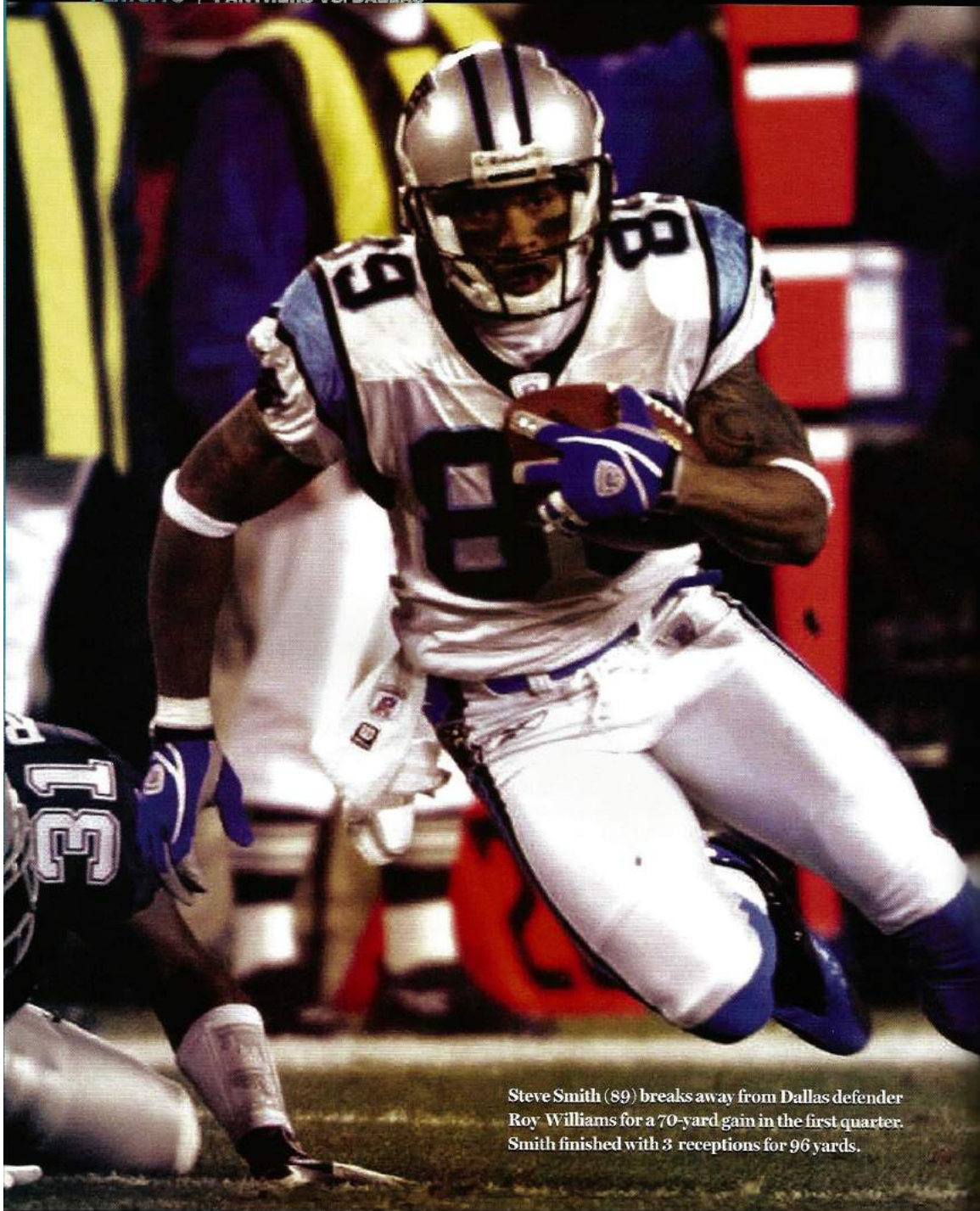
### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Dallas: Carter 10-17-104-0. Carolina: Delhomme 9-18-186-0.

**Rushing** — Dallas: Hambrick 7-27, Anderson 2-6, Carter 1-4.

**Receiving** — Dallas: Glenn 3-30, Galloway 2-46, Witten 2-9, Anderson 1-12, Bryant 1-4, Hambrick 1-3. Carolina: Smith 3-96, Muhammad 2-71, Proehl 1-7, Hoover 1-6, Wiggins 1-6, Mangrum 1-0.

**Attendance** — 73,014



Steve Smith (89) breaks away from Dallas defender Roy Williams for a 70-yard gain in the first quarter. Smith finished with 3 receptions for 96 yards.

## Panthers' Smith Making Name for Himself

BY TOM PEDULLA  
USA TODAY  
January 7, 2004

**W**hen the Carolina Panthers' Steve Smith speaks of ultimately reaching the Hall of Fame, don't snicker.

Sure, it is a lofty goal for a third-year man who has just broken through the 1,000-yard receiving barrier for the first time. But drive and dreams already have allowed the 5-foot-9, 185-pounder to advance his career beyond what was projected.

At least his spirit must be admired when he says, "I don't want to be a one-season wonder. I want to play a long time and hopefully make it to the Hall of Fame one day. That doesn't happen in one season."

Smith led Carolina with 88 catches, 1,110 receiving yards, and seven touchdowns in helping the franchise complete the transformation from an NFL-worst-15 record two years ago to surprising NFC South champion.

He again showed the way with five receptions for 135 yards and a score in the 29-10 dismantling of Dallas in the Panthers' first postseason game since 1996, allowing them to advance to Saturday's divisional playoff in St. Louis.

When his receiving ability is combined with his extraordinary skill at returning kicks, Smith represents a lethal weapon.

He is the only player with at least 1,900 combined net yards in each of his first three seasons since the NFL adopted the 16-game schedule in 1978.

These kinds of accomplishments were not necessarily envisioned when Carolina took Smith in the third round

of the 2001 draft.

He was viewed primarily as an explosive return man, a limited role that did not please the former Utah standout.

"I was thirsty to play receiver," he recalls. "Like most rookies, I wanted to come in and do everything now. I had to learn to wait."

"That was part of my problem. I just didn't want to wait for anything. I was in a hurry."

As Smith soon learned, rushed pass routes are sloppy pass routes that don't gain separation from the defender. And receivers who put too much pressure on themselves tend to suffer from a case of the drops.

Smith returned three kicks for touchdowns as a rookie to reach the Pro Bowl as a specialist, but did not excel where he most wanted.

He finished with only 10 catches for 154 yards.

He was not at all discouraged.

"I got more determined," he said. "I always knew I was a receiver and I was willing to work as hard as I needed to get what I wanted. I wasn't going to go back home. I was going to go straight ahead."

When John Fox replaced George Seifert as head coach, it meant a needed fresh start for many players, and Smith was among those who benefited.

Fox delighted in the youngster's speed and elusiveness and saw in him a player who could emerge as a dynamic element in the passing game.

Smith took huge strides in 2002 with 54 receptions for 872 yards. He continued to extend his upward curve this season.

Quarterback Jake Delhomme thinks the player who ranked fourth in the NFC in receptions is still far from peaking.

### Smith Piles Up Yards

Carolina's Steve Smith is still building a reputation but ranks among the NFL's elite in combines net yards since the Panthers took the return man and wide receiver in the third round of the 2001 draft.

Player	Team	Net Yards
Priest Holmes	Kansas City	6,556
LaDainian Tomlinson	San Diego	6,145
Ahman Green	Green Bay	5,864
Steve Smith	Carolina	5,803
Dante Hall	Kansas City	5,780

# Smith's Catch Wins OT Thriller Against Rams

**W**hen nerves should be frayed and the ball tough to grip, the Carolina Panthers feel right at home. Even in a dome where visitors hardly ever win.

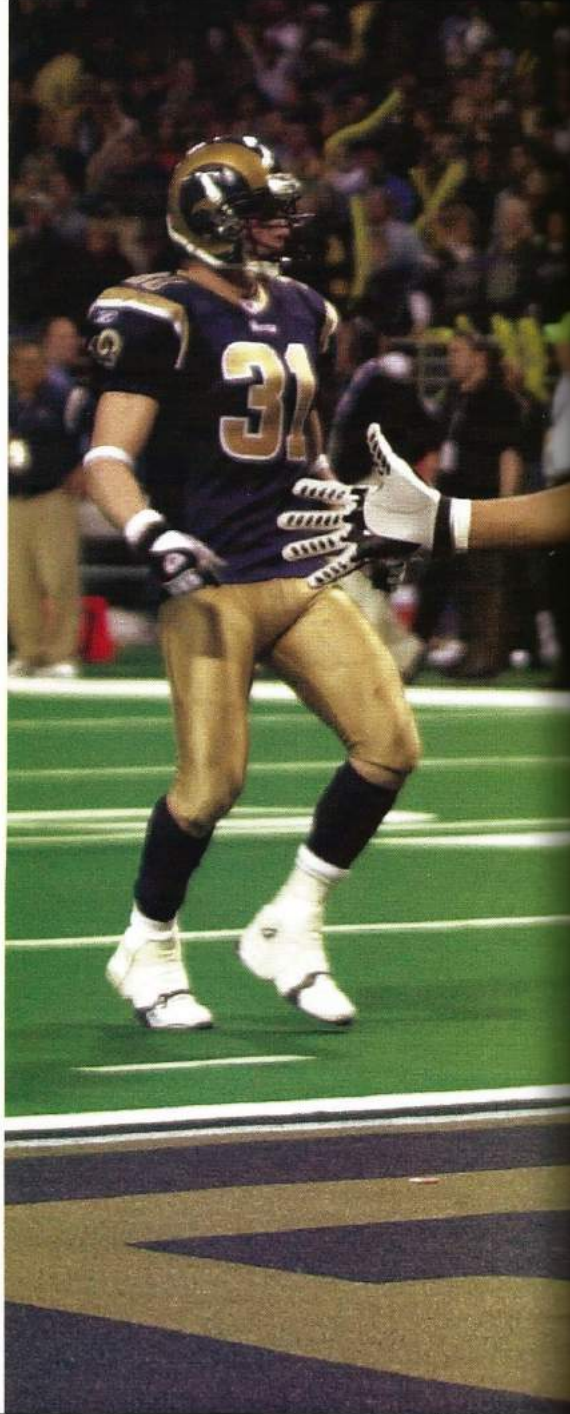
After blowing an 11-point lead in the final 2:39, the Panthers beat the St. Louis Rams 29-23 in double overtime today on Steve Smith's 69-yard touchdown reception. That capped one of the wildest, most thrilling finishes in NFL history, and sent the sellout crowd home in stunned silence at the Rams' first playoff loss in the deafening dome.

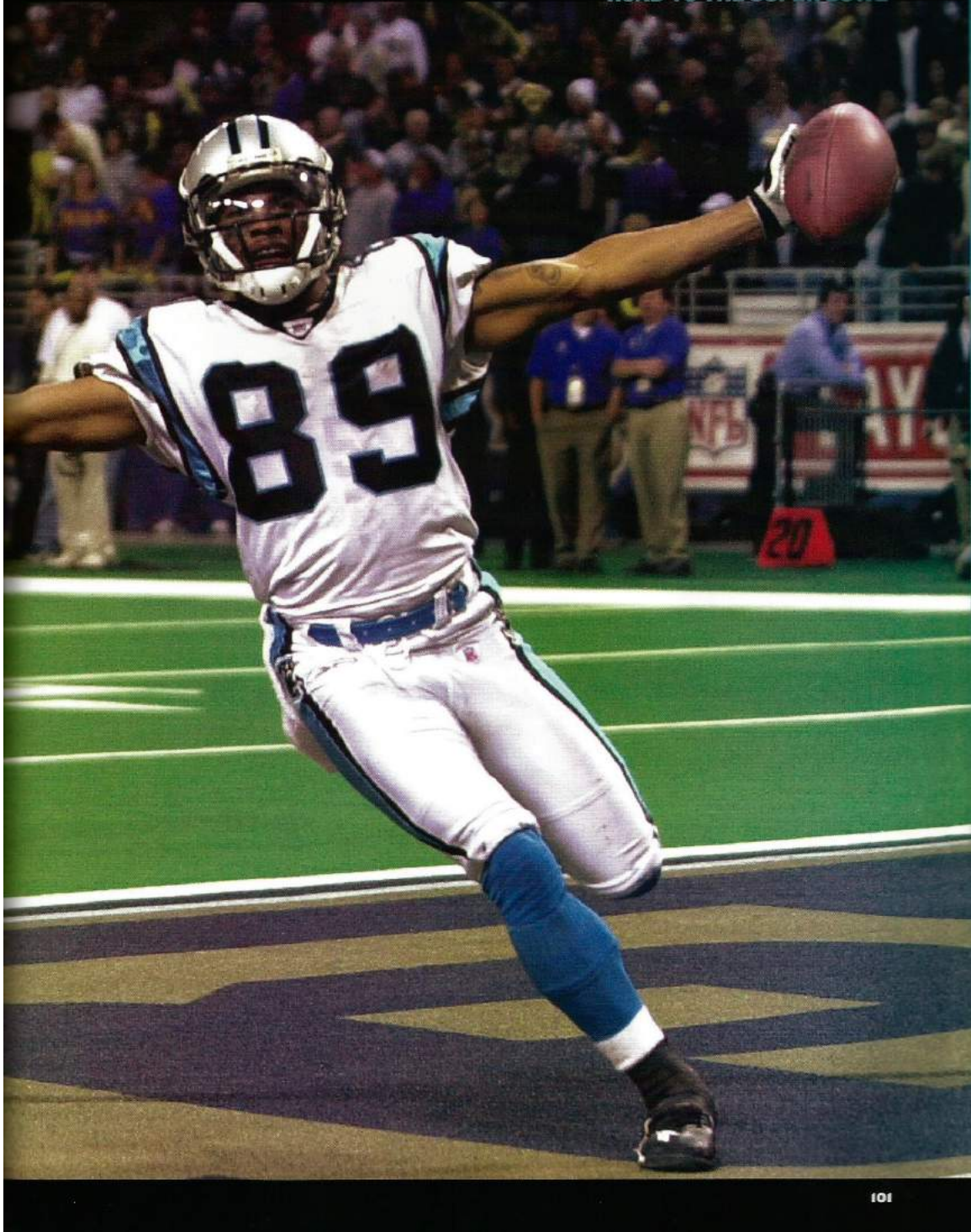
Carolina, 10-3 in games decided by six points or fewer this season, advanced to the NFC championship game against either Philadelphia or Green Bay.

"We've been in so many and we just believe we can get it done in some kind of way," Jake Delhomme said after his pass found Smith in the seams of a zone. "I think the biggest thing is we stayed calm. Our guys don't take a deep breath and hope."

But the Panthers, in the playoffs for only the second time, made it plenty difficult in a back-and-forth game

**Steve Smith's 69-yard TD dash in the second period of OT sealed Carolina's 29-23 win.**











featuring momentum swings with just about every possession.

"It's what we went through all year," said Panthers receiver Ricky Proehl, a former Ram. "We've had so many tight games, we just keep fighting."

After St. Louis rallied to tie the game in regulation on a touchdown run by Marshall Faulk, a 2-point conversion, an onside kick recovered by kicker Jeff Wilkins and a 33-yard field goal by Wilkins, Carolina nearly won it on the first possession of overtime.

The Panthers took the kickoff and moved to the Rams 22. John Kasay made a 40-yard field goal, but the Panthers were called for delay of game. The offense came back for two runs and Kasay, the last original Panther, was wide right from 45 yards.

Wilkins was short on a 53-yard attempt for St. Louis, and the Rams then forced a punt. With St. Louis moving, rookie Ricky Manning Jr., wrestled a pass away from Torry Holt for an interception at the Carolina 38.

"We fought so hard," Manning said, "we had to win that game."

Three plays later, on the first snap of the second OT, they did. Smith carried Delhomme's pass into the end zone to win the fifth-longest game ever.

"I just beat the safety (Jason Sehorn) and Jake threw one of those pretty balls in the last minute, like he always does," Smith said.

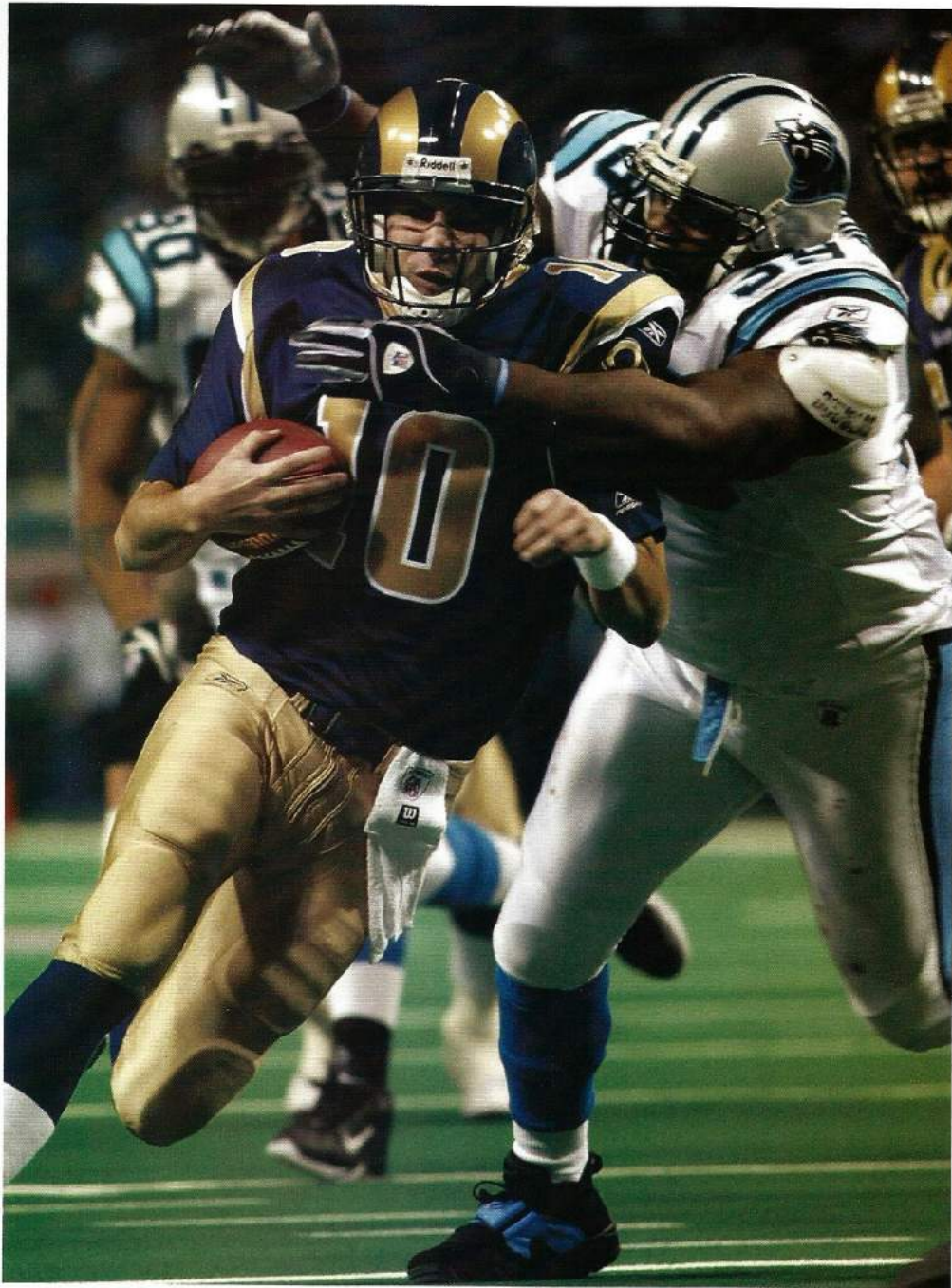
Carolina also snapped a 14-game home winning streak for the Rams in the Edward Jones Dome, which fell eerily silent as Smith scooted to the end zone.

The place couldn't have been louder in the final minutes of regulation. Up by 11 points, Carolina had Kasay try a 54-yard field goal, which hit the left upright with 6:29 to go.

That sparked the Rams, who were outplayed most of the game.

Faulk capped a 15-play drive with a 1-yard run with 2:39 left and Marc Bulger's pass to Dane Looker for the conversion made it 23-20. Wilkins then recovered the onside kick that set up his game-tying field goal as regulation expired.

**Rams halfback Marshall Faulk (28) is surrounded by Panthers defenders Mike Minter (left) Deon Grant (27) and Dan Morgan (55) during the first OT.**





St. Louis quarterback Marc Bulger (10) took a beating from the Panthers' defense.

Coach Mike Martz actually played for the tie, confident the Rams' home-field advantage would come

through.

"I felt like if we could get it into overtime, we would win this game. I was very sure about the decision and don't regret the decision," Martz said.

The Panthers, 4-0 in overtime, got a controversial first-half touchdown on Muhsin Muhammad's fumble recovery in the end zone, and a 7-yard TD run by Brad Hoover with 8:50 remaining, plus Kasay's three field goals.

Carolina used the strong running of backup DeShaun Foster and some timely defensive stops to take control. Foster, in place of injured Stephen Davis, ran for 95 yards, keeping the Rams off-balance all day.

Davis left with a quadriceps injury after a 64-yard second-quarter run.

Delhomme, growing more comfortable with each playoff outing, was 16-for-26 for 290 yards, including the winning pass under the most difficult of circumstances.

ST. LOUIS | JANUARY 10, 2004

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>St. Louis</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>23</b>

#### Scoring Summary

##### 1st Quarter

**STL** 5:50 Jeff Wilkins kicks 20-yard field goal

##### 2nd Quarter

**STL** 13:30, Jeff Wilkins kicks 26-yard field goal

**CAR** 12:13, Jake Delhomme fumbles, recovered by Muhsin Muhammad for TD (CAR) (John Kasay kick)

**STL** 7:00, Jeff Wilkins kicks 24-yard field goal

**CAR** 1:12, John Kasay kicks a 45-yard field goal

##### 3rd Quarter

**STL** 11:30, Jeff Wilkins kicks 51-yard field goal

**CAR** 7:55, John Kasay kicks 52-yard field goal

**CAR** 1:00, John Kasay kicks 34-yard field goal

##### 4th Quarter

**CAR** 9:20, Brad Hoover runs up the middle for 7-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**STL** 2:44, Marshall Faulk runs to the right for 1-yard TD (2-point attempt converted, Marc Bulger pass to Dane Looker)

**STL** 0:03, Jeff Wilkins kicks a 33-yard field goal

#### 2nd Overtime

**CAR** 15:00, Jake Delhomme passes to Steve Smith down the middle for 69 yards

#### Team Stats

	CAR	STL
First Downs	24	23
Rushes-Yards	41-216	23-64
Passing Yards	269	316
Comp Att-Int	16-27-1	27-46-3
Punts-Avg.	2-36-5	1-46.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties-Yards	13-92	5-33
Time of Possession	41:06	34:04

#### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 16-26-290-1, Smith 0-1-0-0. St. Louis: Bulger 27-46-332-0.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Foster 21-95, Davis 6-86, Goings 6-22, Hoover 2-9, Smith 1-7, Muhammad 1-3, Delhomme 4-(-6). St. Louis: Faulk 19-53, Bulger 4-11.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Smith 6-16, Muhammad 5-70, Wiggins 1-21, Hoover 2-16, Goings 1-12, Foster 1-8. St. Louis: Bruce 7-116, Looker 2-31, Furrey 4-30, Cleeland 1-28, Holt 2-21, Manumaleuna 1-19, Goodspeed 1-9.

**Attendance** — 66,165



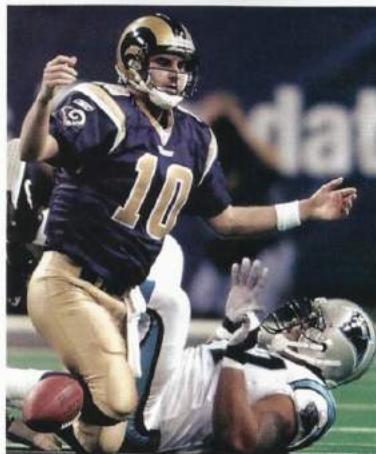
Above: A pair of Rams defenders, Brian Young (66) and Travis Fisher (22), and Carolina's Muhsin Muhammad (87), Ricky Proehl (center) and Steve Smith (89) dive for the loose football during a fumble following a shuttle-pass in the first half. The loose ball was recovered by Muhammad for a touchdown. Below: Marc Bulger gets sacked again.

Bulger was 27-for-46 for 332 yards, but had three interceptions.

"It's the toughest loss of my career," Bulger said. "I still can't believe we lost that game now."

The first half ended 10-9 for Carolina, but it was not a defensive standoff. Both teams moved well, only to be undermined by penalties and sloppiness. In one sequence, the Panthers went from the St. Louis 19 to the 49 after three successive penalties on guard Kevin Donnalley.

Carolina finished with 13 penalties for 92 yards a week after no penalties and no turnovers in a 29-10 victory



against Dallas.

Kasay had a 45-yard field goal and Muhammad scored the disputed touchdown when Delhomme fumbled while attempting a shovel pass. The ball eluded several players before Muhammad pounced on it just over the goal line.

Martz challenged the call, but referee Mike Carey ruled it was an attempted lateral that Rams defensive end Leonard Little deflected.

"We grew tonight," Panthers defensive end Mike Rucker said. "This is a major building block for us."

—By *The Associated Press*

## Panthers Planning to Prolong Party

BY GARY MIHOCS  
USA TODAY  
January 15, 2004

Carolina is in the Final Four. Frenzy is in the air. Historically in this college basketball hotbed, that would mean North Carolina Tar Heels and March Madness.

Here and now, it's Carolina Panthers football mania.

Beat the Philadelphia Eagles on the road Sunday in the NFC title game, and the Panthers will head to the first Super Bowl in their checkered nine-season history.

"As long as the Panthers are playing like they are right now, Tar Heels basketball comes second for me. I'm serious," says trucker Cy Capps, 45, of Winston-Salem, N.C.

"I'm taking my vacation to go to Houston if we go to the Super Bowl," says Capps, wearing the No. 90 jersey of defensive end Julius Peppers, a former Tar Heels star in football and a basketball player, too.

Carolina has beaten Dallas and St. Louis in the playoffs behind a rugged defense and running game, a new quarterback who spent six seasons as a New Orleans backup and practice squad player and a second-year coach who took over a team that went 1-15 before his arrival.

The Panthers were 7-9 last season, last in the NFC South. En route to an 11-5 record and the division title this season, they won three of four overtime games. Last weekend in an NFC divisional playoff, they won in double OT in St. Louis.

The test now: Ignore the hoopla and stick to what got them here.

"I'm not looking at it as there's only four teams left," says quarterback Jake Delhomme (pronounced DUH-lome). "So I'm still thinking there's a full slate of games again this weekend because you've just got to keep on going on."

Head coach John Fox, former defensive coordina-

tor of the New York Giants, says: "The game gets bigger on the outside. . . . We try to stay the same on the inside."

A quick turnaround

At his first minicamp, for 2002, Fox told the Panthers they had talent but lacked toughness.

"We needed somebody who was going to direct this ship, and we got him in John Fox," safety Mike Minter says. "When you get a guy coming in here the first day and telling you you're not tough, you've got to start looking at what he's talking about."

During the 1-15 season in 2001, they lost seven games by four points or fewer. This season, they tied NFL records with seven victories by three points or fewer and three overtime wins.

Although 30 of the 53 Panthers joined the club during the last two seasons, all but six starters were with Carolina during the 1-15 year.

Yet there have been key additions under what general manager Marty Hurney describes as a "checks-and-balances" system: "Our coaches, our personnel people, we have a lot of discussions. . . . John and I have the final say, and it's worked well."

\* It worked with two free agents this season.

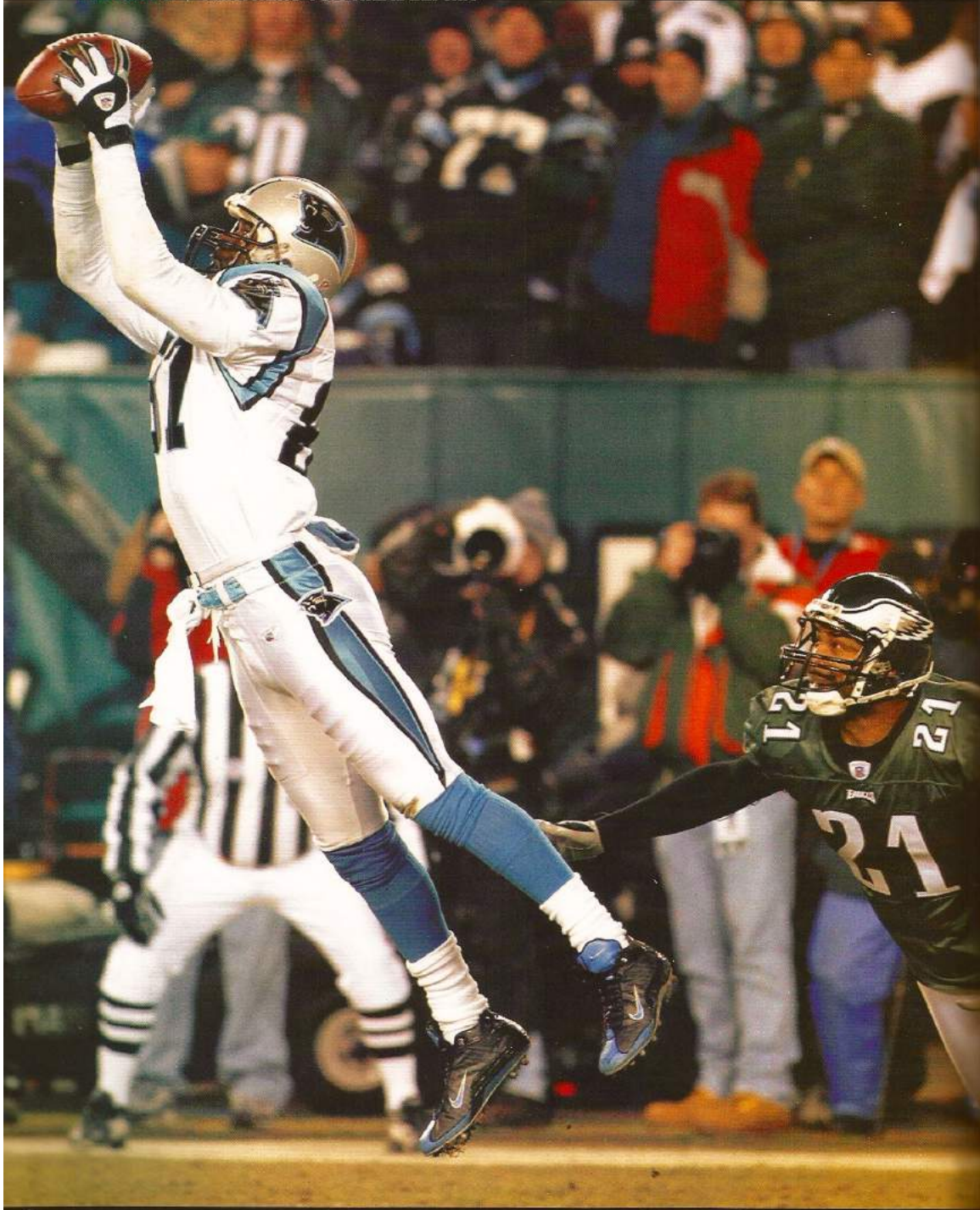
Although his Sunday role is iffy because of a thigh injury, Stephen Davis ran for a team-record 1,444 yards after being signed from the Washington Redskins.

Delhomme, a Louisiana native, was a find. Teammates call him Bobby Boucher (boo-SHAY) after the character who went from the bayou to overnight football stardom in the movie *The Waterboy*.

Panthers coaches and scouts researched him thoroughly. "We just kept hearing things that we find to be very important in a quarterback . . . the leadership, the work ethic," Fox says. "He was a guy that just didn't have an opportunity to speak of."

Delhomme liked what he saw last season in Carolina, which won four of its last five after losing eight in a row: "I just had something in my mind about Carolina."

PLAYOFFS | PANTHERS VS. PHILADELPHIA



# Panthers Pound Philly, Super Bowl Next

**T**he Carolina Panthers celebrated as if they've done this before.

The Philadelphia Eagles dressed in stunned silence, something they've certainly done before.

The upstart Panthers became the latest team to torment the Eagles, winning a 14-3 shocker that ended with an injured Donovan McNabb watching helplessly from the sideline.

"We have a bunch of strong-willed guys, and they keep swinging their sword until they get it done," said Panthers coach John Fox, who engineered the remarkable turnaround from a 1-15 record two years ago.

In two weeks, the Panthers will face New England for the NFL title.

"They aren't going to be denied," Fox said.

For the third straight year, the Eagles were denied their first trip to the Super Bowl since 1981. This one was particularly hurtful.

"It's going to be hard to swallow again," McNabb said, "To think about this all of the offseason again and try to get over this hurdle. ...

"For us to get here three times and not be able to go further, it hurts."

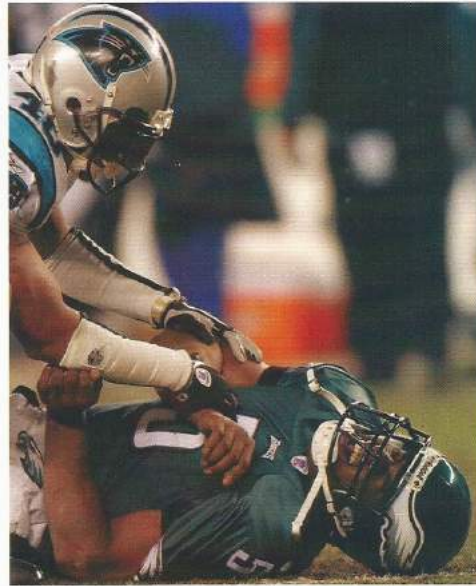
Rookie Ricky Manning Jr. hurt the Eagles most, getting three interceptions against McNabb, who suffered separated rib cartilage on a second-quarter sack.

"We were attacking all day," said Manning, also a hero last week when his interception led to the winning touchdown in double overtime against the Rams.

Fox's fierce defense produced five sacks and one more pickoff, by Dan Morgan.

"We were so physical out there," said safety Mike Minter, who forced a turnover with a ferocious hit. "We do it all the time."

Stephen Davis, coming off a quadriceps injury following the win at St. Louis, rushing for 76 yards and



**Above: Donovan McNabb grimaces after being tackled by sacked. Opposite Page: Eagles cornerback Bobby Taylor (21) watches Muhsin Muhammad grab a TD pass in the second quarter.**

backup DeShaun Foster got 60 and a touchdown.

"I was ready," Davis said in a business-like dressing room. "We all were ready."

The Eagles were not. Again.

They haven't won a league crown since 1960. They are now the first team to lose three straight conference championship games since the Dallas Cowboys from 1980-82. And they are the first team to host consecutive conference championships and lose both since game sites originally were determined by record in 1975.

"The writing is on the wall," cornerback Bobby Taylor

said. "We pretty much know the chances of what's going to happen."

Eight days after ending the Rams' 14-game home winning streak, the Panthers marched into The Linc and grabbed their first conference crown. They'd gotten this far in 1996, their second season, but lost to Green Bay.

In January, they have routed Dallas at home before their two biggest road victories.

Now, it's the Patriots, who beat Indianapolis 24-14 earlier Sunday for the AFC title, on Feb. 1 in Houston.

"I'm going to try not to think about the Patriots tonight so I can at least get some sleep," quarterback Jake Delhomme said. "I don't want to think about that defense just yet."

Fox's opportunistic defense made the difference Sunday, led by a fierce pass rush and third-round draft pick Manning, who tied an NFC championship game record with his three pickoffs. The Panthers hurt McN-

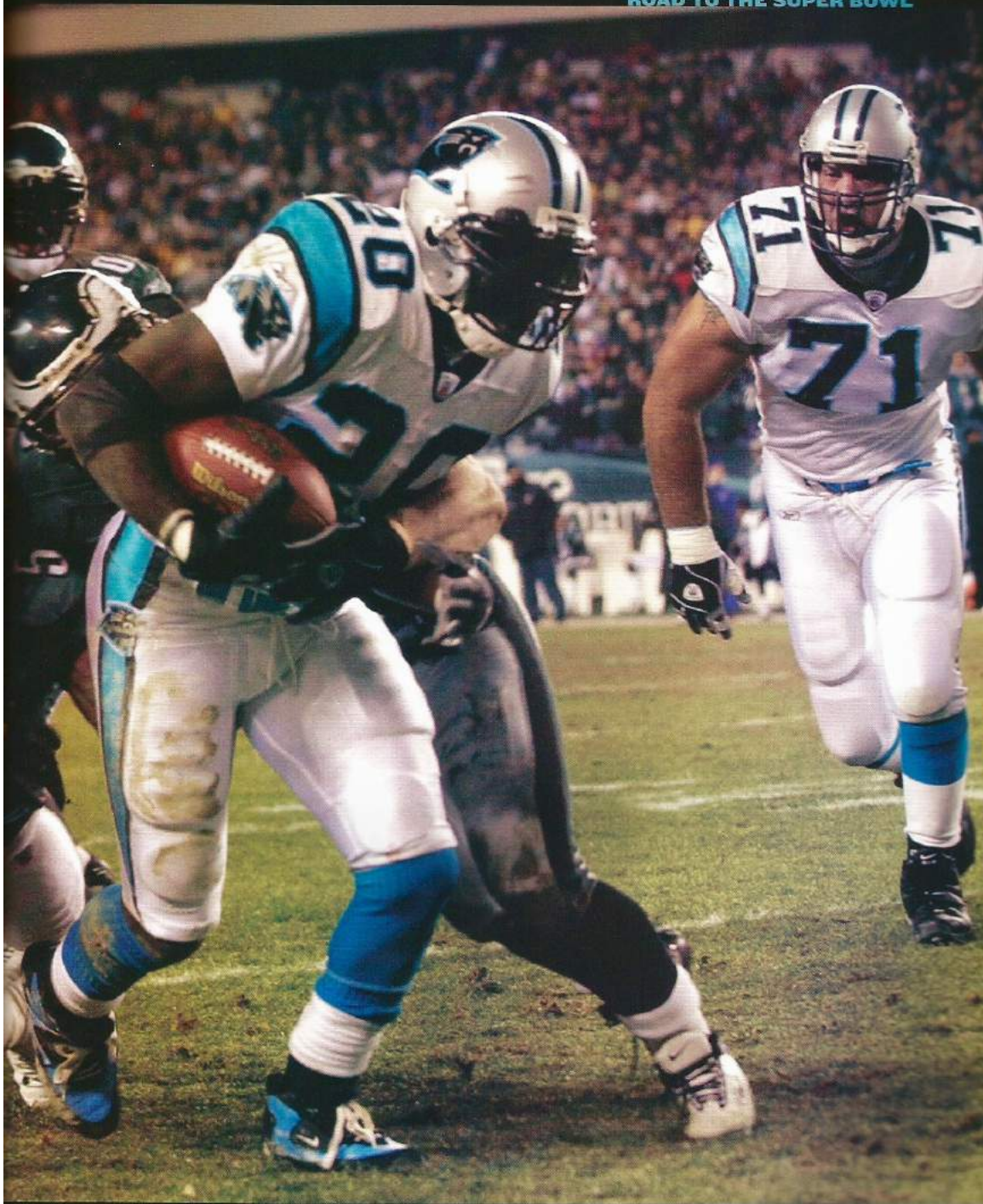


Above: A frustrated Eagles fan. Right: DeShaun Foster (20) rumbles for a TD in the third quarter against Philadelphia.





ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL



PHILADELPHIA | JANUARY 18, 2004

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Philadelphia</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>3</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 2nd Quarter

**CAR** 10:20, Jake Delhomme passes to Muhsin Muhammad to the left for 24-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

**PHI** 3:12, David Akers kicks 41-yard field goal

#### 3rd Quarter

**CAR** 4:18, DeShaun Foster runs to the right for 1-yard TD (John Kasay kick)

### Team Stats

	CAR	PHI
First Downs	14	18
Rushes Yards	40-155	26-137
Passing Yards	101	152
Comp-Att-Int	9-14-0	17-36-4
Punts-Avg.	8-38.3	4-36.8
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards	5-35	4-34
Time of Possession	30:11	29:49

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 9-14-101-0, Philadelphia: McNabb 10-22-100-0, Detmer 7-14-88-0.

**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 19-76, Foster 14-60, Delhomme 4-7, Muhammad 1-5, Smart 1-5, Hoover 1-2. Philadelphia: Staley 13-79, Buckhalter 11-48, McNabb 2-10.

**Receiving** — Carolina: Muhammad 2-39, Smith 3-26, Davis 1-21, Hoover 1-6, Foster 1-6, Goings 1-3. Philadelphia: Lewis 4-69, Mitchell 4-38, Staley 4-33, Buckhalter 2-26, Smith 1-12, Thrash 1-9, Ritchie 1-1.

**Attendance** — 65,158

abb in the second quarter, then destroyed Philadelphia with a powerful display in the third period.

By the final quarter, McNabb was out of the game and the Eagles were out of options.

With McNabb sidelined, Koy Detmer led the Eagles to the Carolina 11, but then forced a throw over the middle that Morgan grabbed.

Overall, McNabb was just 10-for-22 for 100 yards. He could provide none of the heroics of last week, when he rallied the Eagles over Green Bay 20-17 in overtime. This decisive loss will erase the glory of "fourth-and-26," the play that saved Philadelphia's season — for one week.

Carolina barely needed Delhomme's passing and he was a mere 9-for-14 for 101 yards.

Manning's third interception — off a deflection when receiver James Thrash was hit by Minter — and his 17-yard return were critical. So was the inability of the Eagles' secondary to make the same kind of plays.

Lito Sheppard's 14-yard interference penalty against Steve Smith put Carolina at the 1. Foster then powered through four tacklers for a 14-3 lead with 4:11 left in the third quarter.

In the first half, despite double coverage, Muhsin Muhammad made a 24-yard touchdown catch for a 7-0 lead.



Carolina coach John Fox receives a Gatorade bath in the final seconds of the Panthers' 14-3 win over Philadelphia.



**Philadelphia Eagles linebacker Justin Ena (58) manages to stop Panthers wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad (87) in the open field during the second quarter.**

"That was a play I could have made," Taylor said. "No excuse. I turned around and it was too late."

Earlier in the second quarter, on a third-and-1, Foster fumbled, but teammate Jermaine Wiggins pounced on it for a 2-yard gain. Soon after, Muhammad came back for the ball when Taylor and Brian Dawkins didn't.

Unfazed, Philadelphia marched to the Carolina 23, where McNabb tripped going back to pass and was sacked by Mike Rucker. Shaken with the rib injury, he left for one play, then returned to complete a 10-yard pass to Freddie Mitchell that originally was ruled a drop.

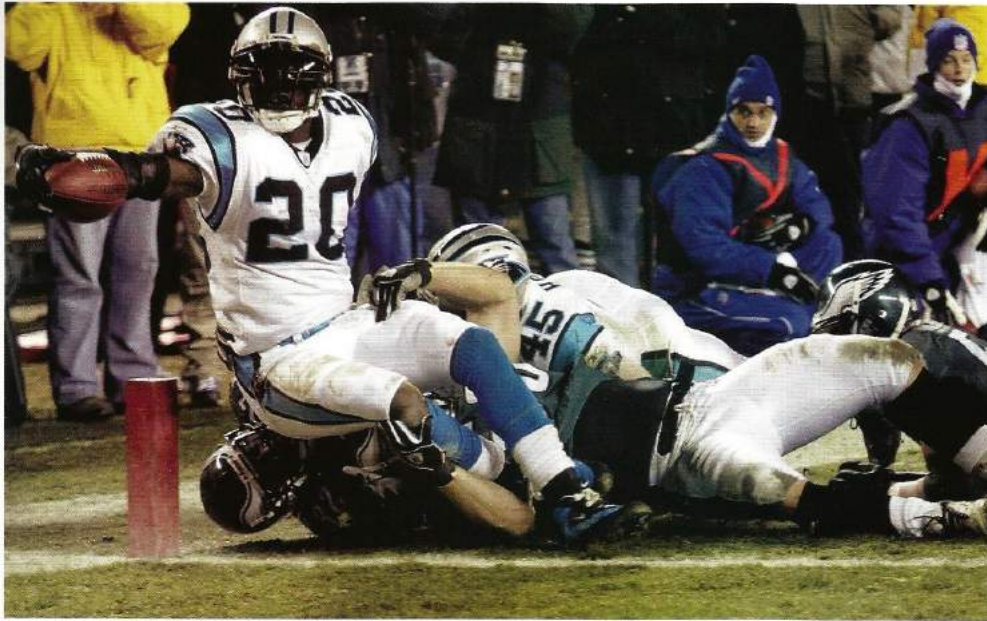
But after coach Andy Reid's successful replay challenge, David Akers kicked a 41-yard field goal for the Eagles' only points.

Manning picked off McNabb's poor pass with 47 seconds remaining in the first half, which ended 7-3.

Manning's second interception was even more significant. He stepped in front of Todd Pinkston on a third down from the Carolina 18 and McNabb threw the ball directly to him. Manning celebrated with an Ali Shuffle.

He'd deliver the knockout punch a little later and had three interceptions in 9:39.

—By *The Associated Press*



Panthers halfback DeShaun Foster (20) finished with 60 yards rushing on 14 carries and 1 TD.



Cornerback Ricky Manning Jr. (24) is tackled by Philadelphia receiver James Thrask (bottom) after intercepting a pass from Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb in the second quarter.

## Carolina Has Something New to Celebrate

BY VIV BERNSTEIN  
*The New York Times*  
 January 19, 2004

**T**he stadium lights were on at 2 o'clock in the morning Monday. It was a strange, bright beacon in the sky in a usually quiet uptown that often goes dark much earlier in the night.

The hour did not seem to matter, and the breezy, cold conditions did not keep fans away. Charlotte has never celebrated sending a team to the Super Bowl before, and thousands crowded behind barriers outside Bank of America Stadium to welcome the Carolina Panthers home after a 14-3 victory over the Eagles in the National Football Conference championship game Sunday night in Philadelphia.

The victory sent the Panthers to the Super Bowl for the first time in franchise history and sent fans into the streets of Charlotte, screaming, honking their horns, waving team flags and reveling.

"The best thing about this is you look all around this whole town, all you see is smiles," said Mark Tait, 40, of Rock Hill, S.C., who drove 20 miles to the stadium after the game.

Mayor Pat McCrory was among the smiling. He attended the game in Philadelphia and flew back immediately after, arriving at the stadium rally shortly before 2 a.m. McCrory said he was harassed by Eagles fans at Lincoln Financial Field and was escorted out by 25 police officers after the Panthers won.

"They know how to curse in Philly," he said. "They're tough. Those are the toughest fans. I've never been called so many names in my life."

He added, "They found out I was mayor and we got a lot of beer thrown our way, I'll tell you that."

The Panthers had anticipated a crowd; team security workers contacted the city police earlier in the week to prepare for such an event. Dozens of police officers were at the stadium controlling the crowd, which was estimated at several thousand. Two fire trucks were there, one with a firefighter atop waving

a huge Panthers flag.

Maj. Maurice Keith said the police had to stop some fans from climbing atop the massive panther statues that adorn the entries to the stadium, but there appeared to be little problem with crowd control.

A band played in front of the stadium steps, a local disc jockey fired up the crowd while they waited for the team buses to arrive. Fans happily trampled the manicured lawns and flower beds around the stadium.

Many brought children, some carried signs. There was "Ricky Manning Bakery - Turnovers Made Every Day," in reference to the three interceptions by Manning, a Panthers cornerback; and "How Do You Like Us Now?"

Some in the Philadelphia news media spent the week leading up to the game insulting Charlotte and the Panthers, who had reached the playoffs just once before in team history. That was in 1996, the second season for the franchise, when the Panthers lost to Green Bay in the N.F.C. championship game.

The Panthers dropped to the bottom of the league in 2001 with a 1-15 record. The resurgence began after that season with the hiring of Coach John Fox, the former Giants defensive coordinator.

Under Fox, the Panthers were 7-9 last season before this year's breakthrough 11-5 record and N.F.C. South title. Still, the Panthers have not been included on anyone's list of the N.F.L.'s elite teams.

"I told the guys on this team, I said, 'Look, don't expect any kind of respect,' "wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad said. "Respect is something that is not given, it's something that's taken. So we've got to go out and we've got to earn respect, and that's what we're working on doing right now, earning respect."

The Panthers had no such problems in Charlotte. A police escort took the team buses to the stadium shortly after 2 a.m., fans roaring as the buses pulled into the stadium parking lot. Players signed autographs and offensive lineman Todd Steussie carried the George Halas Trophy, given to the N.F.C. champion, along the barrier so fans could touch it.

# Vinatieri Wins It Again With FG in Final Seconds

BY DAMON HACK  
*The New York Times*  
Published: February 2, 2004

**A**dam Vinatieri won the Super Bowl with a field goal for the second time in three years Sunday night, converting a 41-yard attempt with four seconds to play that lifted the New England Patriots to a 32-29 victory over the Carolina Panthers.

The National Football League championship was the Patriots' second in three seasons under Coach Bill Belichick, the former Giants and Jets defensive coordinator who has forged a dynasty in New England in a salary-cap era designed to create competition in the N.F.L., not legacies.

The Patriots, as they had all season, took the best shot of their opponent, this time a scrappy Panthers team that showed no fear against a veteran-laden New England team.

The Panthers — coached by John Fox, another former Giants defensive coordinator — had marched downfield after New England scored a go-ahead touchdown with 2 minutes 51 seconds left.

Carolina tied the score with 1:08 to play when Jake Delhomme found Ricky Proehl for 30 yards to the Patriots' 9, where the two hooked up again for a 9-yard touchdown reception to make it 29-29.

The drive, like the Panthers' season, seemed improbable. But it was not enough to subdue Vinatieri, who bounced back from two misses earlier in the game. His final kick gave the Patriots their 15th consecutive victory.

The game's dramatic finish overshadowed two incidents at halftime.

First, Janet Jackson's right breast was exposed at the end of her duet with Justin Timberlake when he pulled off part of her top. Then, before the second-half kick-

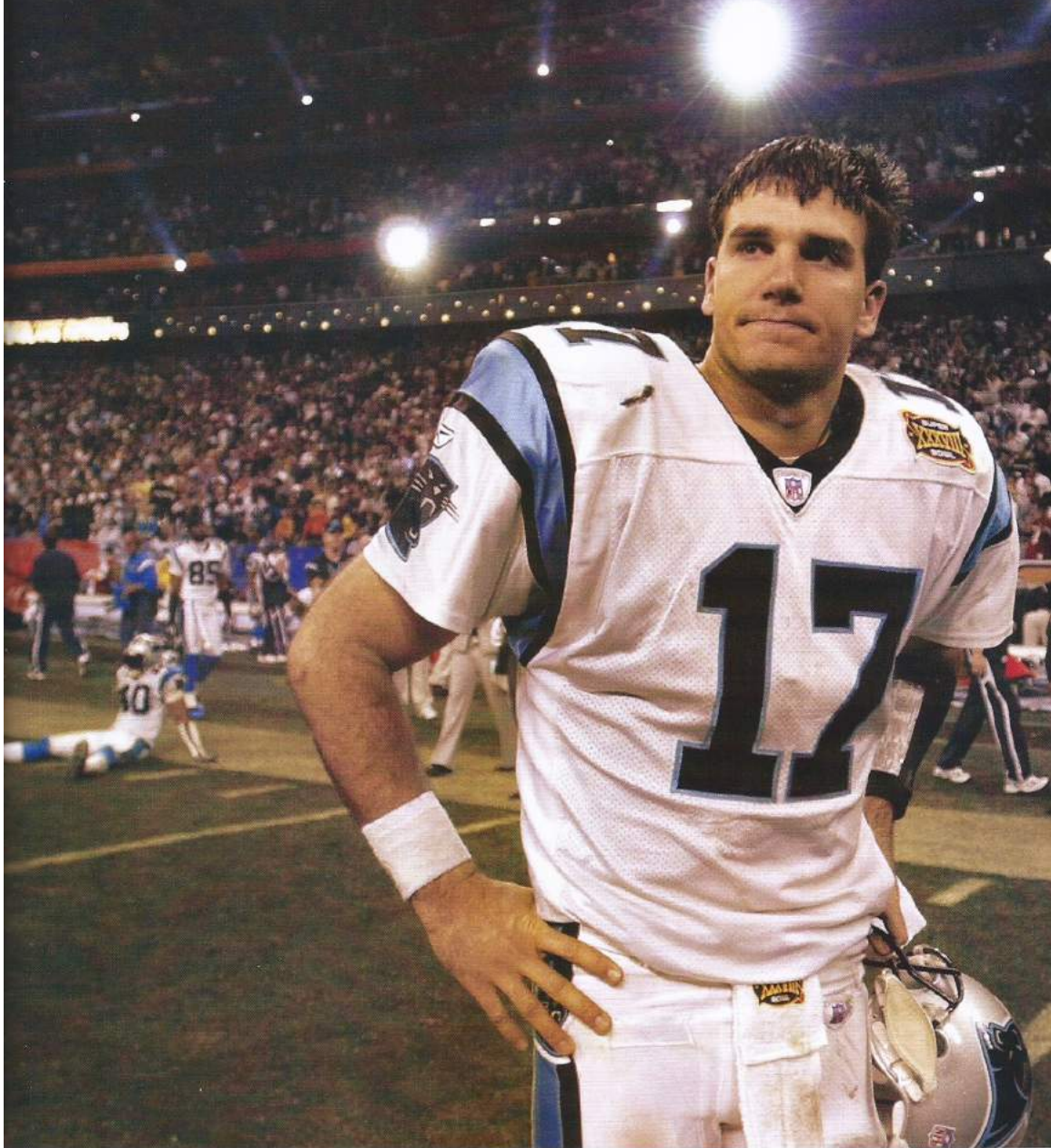


New England Patriots tight end Daniel Graham makes a reception under pressure from Panthers safety Mike Minter (30) during the third quarter.

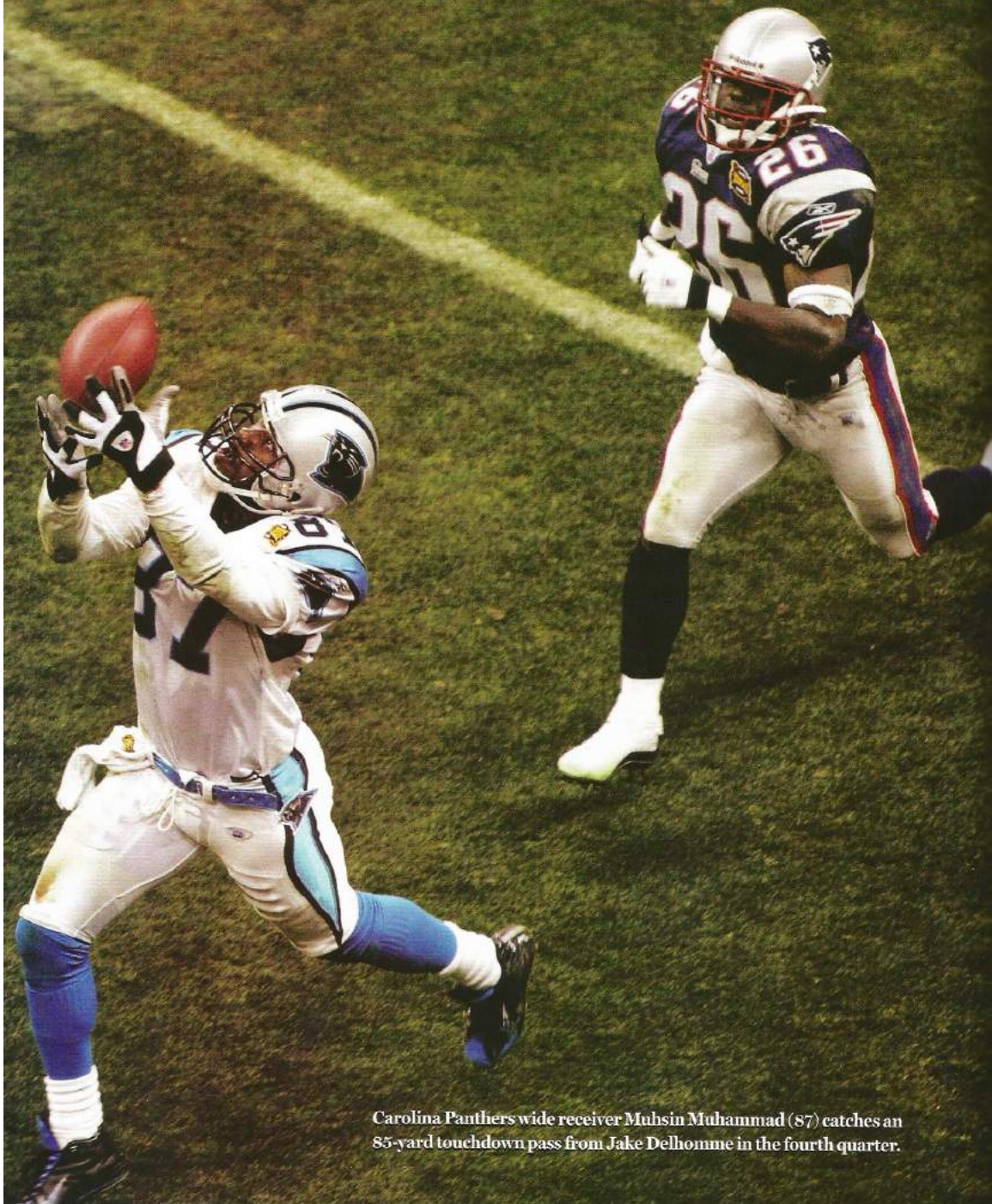
off, a man who had dressed as a referee stripped down to a G-string and shoes and danced on the field before New England linebacker Matt Chatham and then the police stopped him.

Trailing by 21-16 with 6:53 left, Delhomme connected with receiver Muhsin Muhammad on an 85-yard touchdown pass — the longest in Super Bowl history — to take a 22-16 lead. The 2-point conversion failed.

But the Patriots responded behind Brady, who bounced back after a turnover almost cost New Eng-



A frustrated Jake Delhomme (17) walks off the field after the Panthers' 32-29 loss in Super Bowl XXXVIII.



Carolina Panthers wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad (87) catches an 85-yard touchdown pass from Jake Delhomme in the fourth quarter.



land the game. With 7:38 left, the Patriots were at the Carolina 10-yard line, on the brink, perhaps, of securing their second Super Bowl title in three seasons when Tom Brady lofted a poor pass into the end zone that the Panthers cornerback Reggie Howard intercepted.

The Panthers had life yet.

In the third quarter, as in the first, defense dictated the pace, keeping the game close and the suspense peaking.

To build on their 14-10 halftime lead, the Patriots mixed in power runs by Antowain Smith with quick passes to Deion Branch, who surpassed 100 yards receiving in the third quarter.

On a second-and-12 from the Carolina 42, quarterback Tom Brady zipped a pass to tight end Daniel Graham, who rumbled 33 yards down to the 9.

After failing to convert inside the Carolina 20-yard line earlier in the game, the Patriots cashed in from the

Panthers' 2, where Smith rumbled into the end zone around right tackle, lifting New England to a 21-10 lead with 14:49 left in the fourth quarter.

The Patriots could play the fourth quarter with this thought: They had not blown a fourth-quarter lead 31 straight times, dating to Dec. 24, 2000.

But that did not stop Carolina from responding again. A 33-yard touchdown run from DeShaun Foster cut New England's lead to 21-16 with 12:39 left; the 2-point conversion attempt failed.

In the early moments of the game, neither offense could overcome the pressure that the other's defense wrought.

The Panthers, who received the opening kickoff, ran Stephen Davis twice for short yardage before Jake Delhomme overthrew receiver Steve Smith on third-and-3, forcing Carolina to punt from its 30.

After a 28-yard return by the Patriots' Troy Brown, who sustained a bloody nose in the first quarter, the Pa-

HOUSTON | FEBRUARY 1, 2004

<b>Carolina</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>New England</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>32</b>

### Scoring Summary

#### 2nd Quarter

**NEW** 11:55, Deion Branch 5-yard TD pass from Tom Brady (Adam Vinatieri kick)

**CAR** 13:51, Steve Smith 39-yard TD pass from Jake Delhomme (John Kasay kick)

**NEW** 14:42, David Givens 5-yard TD pass from Tom Brady (Adam Vinatieri kick)

**CAR** 15:00, John Kasay 50-yard field goal

#### 4th Quarter

**NEW** 0:11, Antowain Smith 2-yard TD run (Adam Vinatieri kick)

**CAR** 2:21, DeShaun Foster 33-yard TD run (2-point pass failed)

**CAR** 8:07, Mushin Muhammad, 85-yard pass from Jake Delhomme (2-point pass failed)

**NEW** 12:09, Mike Vrabel 1-yard pass from Tom Brady (Kevin Faulk run for 2-point conversion)

**CAR** 13:52, Ricky Proehl 12-yard pass from Jake Delhomme (John Kasay kick)

**NEW** 14:56, Adam Vinatieri 41-yard field goal

### Team Stats

	XXX	XXXX
First Downs	17	29
Rushes-Yards	16-92	35-127
Passing Yards	295	354
Comp-Att-Int	16-33-0	32-48-1
Punts-Avg.	7-44.3	5-34.6
Penalties-Yards	12-73	8-60
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-0
Time Of Possession	21:02	38:58

### Individual Stats

**Passing** — Carolina: Delhomme 33-16-323-3. New England: Brady 48-32-354-3.

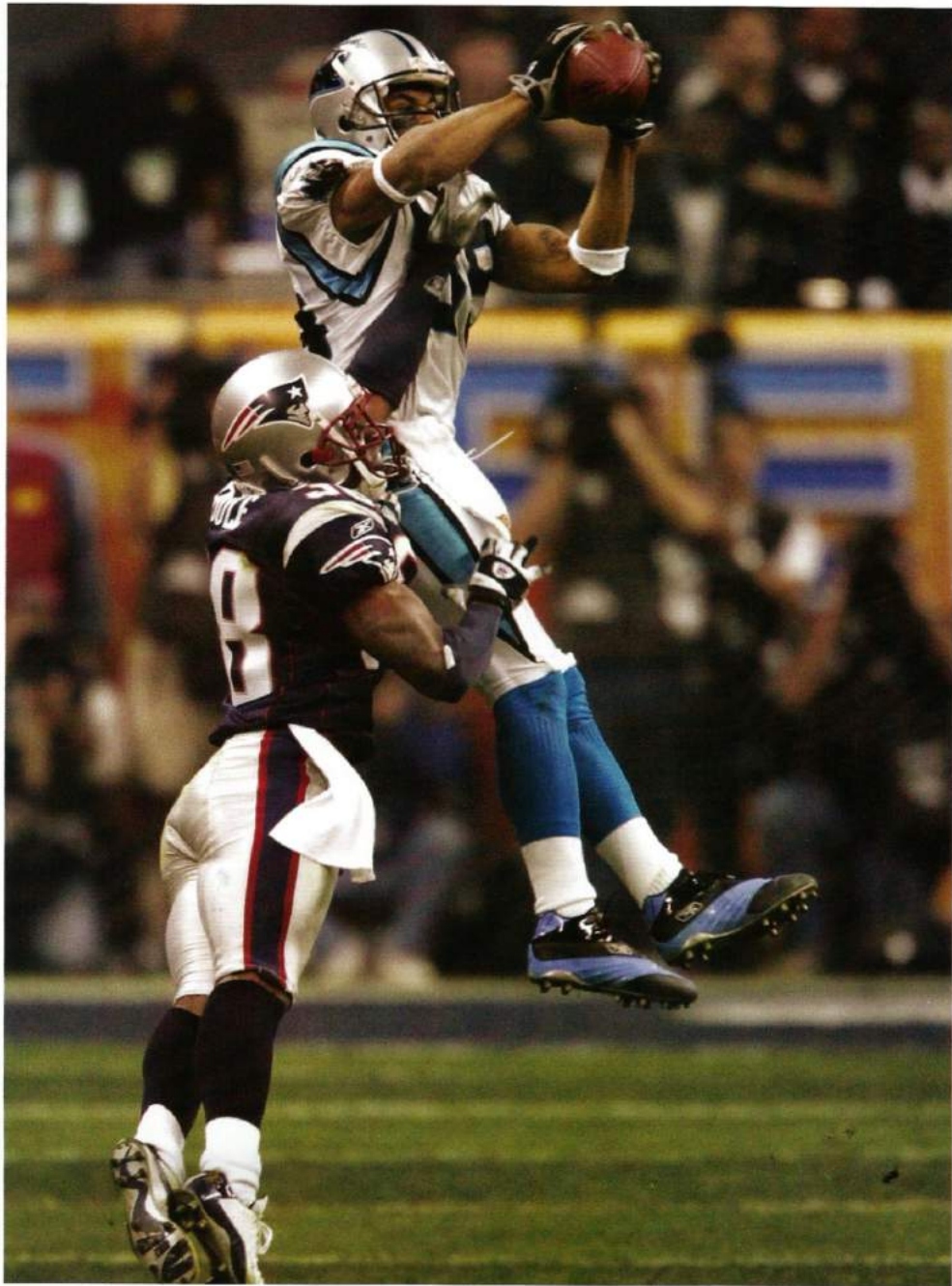
**Rushing** — Carolina: Davis 13-49, Foster 3-43. Patriots: Smith 26-83, Faulk 6-42, Brady 2-12, Brown 1(-10).

**Receiving** — Carolina: Muhammad 4-140, Smith 4-80, Proehl 4-71, Wiggins 2-21, Foster 1-9, Mangrum 1-2.

**Attendance** — 71,525

XXXVIII

SUPER BOWL | PANTHERS VS. NEW ENGLAND



triotics motored downfield to Carolina's 12, but Adam Vinatieri missed a 31-yard field goal attempt to the right.

It was the first time in six games that New England did not score on its opening drive.

The miss was a harbinger. Points would be hard to come by for most of the first half.

New England pressured Delhomme often, chasing him, spinning him around and knocking him down. The Patriots hit him so hard on one play that his left shoulder pad popped out of his jersey.

On the Panthers' first three possessions, they could not register a first down. After the first 15 minutes of play, neither team had scored, the fifth time in Super Bowl history that a first quarter had elapsed without a score.

The start of the second quarter only steeled the resolve of each defense, especially New England's. Each Davis run was met by a throng of

Patriots tacklers, led by the 365-pound anchor, nose tackle Ted Washington.

Vinatieri, with 6:08 left in the first half, had a chance to redeem his earlier miss, but Panthers defensive lineman Shane Burton timed his leap perfectly and blocked Vinatieri's 36-yard attempt.

No previous Super Bowl had gone so long without a point. It seemed that only a turnover could lead these teams into the end zone.

The Patriots were recipients of a turnover on the Panthers' next drive when linebacker Mike Vrabel sprinted around left tackle and stripped

Delhomme of the football just as he was about to throw on third-and-12 from the Panthers' 25. Defensive lineman Richard Seymour recovered the fumble, setting up the New England offense on the Panthers' 20.

Three plays later, Brady faked a handoff to Antowain Smith up the middle and hit Branch for a 5-yard touchdown, giving New England a 7-0 lead with 3:05 left in the half.

The touchdown loosened the reins for both squads.

On Carolina's next possession, Delhomme started clicking with his receivers, finding them for gains of 13,

**Steve Smith (89) goes high to grab a 22-yard pass against cornerback Tyrone Poole.**



**Patriots safety Je'Rod Cherry (30) wraps up Carolina receiver Steve Smith in the third quarter.**

23 and 15 yards.

On third-and-10 from the Patriots' 39, with New England safety Rodney Harrison creeping toward the line of scrimmage, Delhomme found Steve

Smith down the left sideline in single coverage against cornerback Tyrone Poole. Smith hauled in the pass for a 39-yard touchdown, knotting the score at 7-7 with 1:07 left.

Instead of letting the final minute of the half run out, New England kept its foot on the gas. Brady, on second down from the Patriots' 34, unfurled a deep pass down the middle that fell into Branch's hands for a 52-yard gain to Carolina's 14.

After a 9-yard completion to Branch, Brady threw over the middle to David Givens for a 5-yard touchdown and a 14-7 lead with 18 seconds left.

The drive covered 78 yards in 49 seconds.

Carolina, unfazed, recovered Vinatieri's poor squib kick at its own 47 with 18 seconds left. Davis dashed up the middle for 21 yards, setting up John Kasay for a 50-yard field goal attempt with five seconds left.

Kasay's aim was true, and the Patriots' lead had been cut to 14-10 at halftime.

The teams had posted 24 points in the final three minutes of the half after going scoreless for the first 27.

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SUPER BOWL | PANTHERS VS. NEW ENGLAND



Carolina Panthers receiver Jermaine Wiggins (84) leaps over the Patriots' Eugene Wilson (26) to avoid being tackled during the third quarter.



Left: Carolina's Reggie Howard (23) intercepts a pass intended for Christian Fauria (88). Above: Steve Smith, picks up 22-yards on a fourth quarter pass. Below: Patriots receiver Deion Branch pulls away from cornerback Ricky Manning, Jr. (24).



## *Delhomme Kept On Fighting to the Finish*

BY HARVEY ARATON  
*The New York Times*  
 Published: February 2, 2004

For all 11 years of a journeyman's career, he swore he would never come to the Super Bowl unless he earned his way down to the field. Then Jake Delhomme was on the line, barking out an audible, making the call.

"I have two tickets for you and your son," Delhomme told his old friend and former teammate Billy Joe Tolliver.

"Naw, Jake, this is your day," Tolliver replied. "Use them for your family."

But here was the point Tolliver wanted to make about Delhomme of the Panthers, who lost the Super Bowl last night to the New England Patriots at Reliant Stadium but won America's hearts: It was no accident, no serendipitous bounce of fate, that Delhomme, at 29, had evolved from career scrub to the man who nearly undressed the defensive genius Bill Belichick on the game's grandest stage.

"Jake didn't ask me to come, he told me," Tolliver said. "He's not a guy who takes no for answer."

When they were saying on television that Delhomme was playing in what looked like one of the all-time Super Bowl stinkers, when the Panthers couldn't get a first down because the Patriots were beating the whiskers off them at the line of scrimmage, Delhomme stood up and showed there were answers in his right arm, his head and his heart.

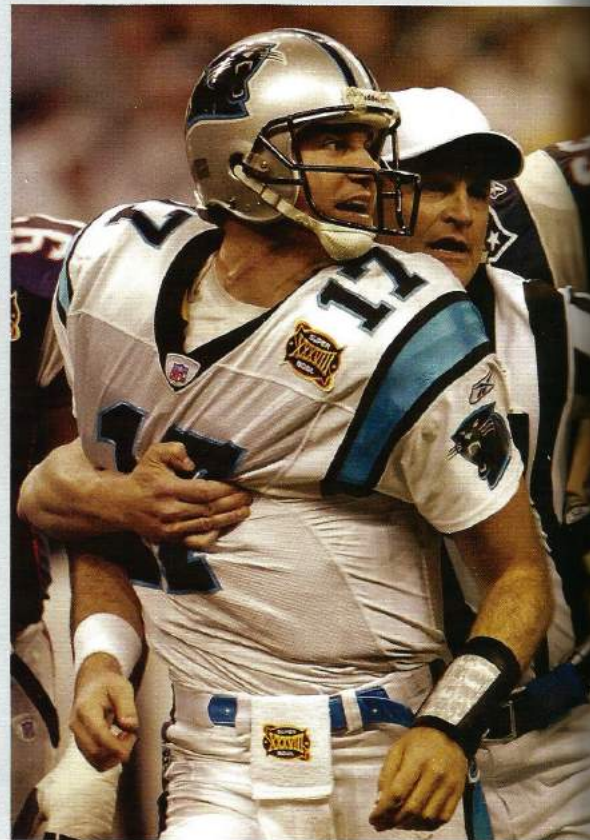
Against the pressure, against the penalties, against all odds, he shredded Belichick's vaunted defense for 323 yards and 3 touchdowns, all in a little more than a half. He completed the longest play in Super Bowl history, an 85-yard touchdown pass

**Jake Delhomme is pulled away by the referee from an altercation with New England Patriots players in the second quarter.**

for the fourth-quarter lead. He drove his team 80 yards in the closing minutes to forge a tie. He was everything you'd want in a championship quarterback, but Tom Brady had the last shot and didn't miss.

"I know one thing about Jake," Tolliver had said before Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard field goal beat the Panthers, 32-29. "This game will not be too big for him."

They spent most of two seasons together in New



Orleans, Delhomme and Tolliver, Cajun and Texan, mostly in the film room and the weight room, and waiting on the sideline. Mike Ditka, then the Saints' head coach, made Tolliver the starter during a typically woful Ditka-era season, 1998. He cut Delhomme the same day, another body blow during Delhomme's six-year bout with himself and the football world to keep his career upright.

He played behind so many quarterbacks, but ask Delhomme to name his mentor, the quarterback who most encouraged him to not surrender to the sadness of Sunday inactivity,

**"I know one thing about Jake," Tolliver had said before Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard field goal beat the Panthers, 32-29. "This game will not be too big for him."**

and he does not hesitate for a moment.

"By far, Billy Joe Tolliver," Delhomme said. "When I was first in New Orleans, I was lucky enough that he took me under his wing, and I just tried to learn from him how to be a true professional."

It was just the veteran looking out for the youngster, Tolliver said, the way Marino once slipped him a phone number with the invitation to call anytime.

"With Jake, you couldn't help but like him, and I'll tell you why," Tolliver said. "With all the guys they played ahead of him in New Orleans, I never once heard him say, 'Man, what was he thinking when he threw that pass?' Some guys just root for the guy ahead of them to fail.

"There were times when he said, 'What am I doing?' But I'd tell him,

'Jake, you'll be a starter in this league.' People always say about quarterbacks, 'He's got it,' but they don't know what 'it' is. I do. You could always see Jake had that unique

ability to make people want to follow him."

This, of course, is what is said about Brady, and with good reason.

"I don't know him from Adam," Delhomme said of Brady with respect, not awe, late last night. "But you can see what a leader he is."

Some quarterbacks just carry themselves as if they were born to win the Super Bowl. Brady, at 26 the youngest to win two, threw a fourth-quarter interception when the Patriots were about the put the Panthers away.

But when he had to get the lead back, Brady did. When he had a minute to win the game against a Panthers defense that was exhausted by the sheer weight of time spent on the field, he put Vinatieri in range, just as he did against St. Louis two years ago.

Brady threw 48 passes, completed 32, as he and Delhomme turned what was supposed to be a soccer match between the former defensive coordinators

Belichick and John Fox into some kind of show. Brady lifted another most valuable player trophy, but Tolliver, waiting in the parking lot for

Delhomme to call him, couldn't stop talking about how his guy had carried himself like a champion.

"Jake was pretty much what I expected," Tolliver said. "He's just got it. He makes big throws in big situations."

Delhomme stepped onto the field last night as an inspiration to every scholastic player riding the bench, every youngster cut from a travel team, every professional career knockabout like Tolliver, who watched from the stands with his 15-year-old son, Austin, and said: "It was like watching my own child. That's how much I love this kid."

The old quarterback, soon to be 38 and living in Shreveport, La., took the tickets, drove the four hours and saw his friend nearly steal the

Super Bowl. It was Brady at the finish, but Delhomme was just warming up in the fourth quarter of a game that was almost a microcosm of his career. The bench is behind him now.

Billy Joe Tolliver was right. This game was not too big for Jake Delhomme.



Panthers running back DeShaun Foster (20) dives into the end zone for a touchdown past New England Patriots safety Rodney Harrison in the fourth quarter.



No.	Player	Pos.	Wt.	Ht.	Birthdate	Exp.	College
4	John Kasay	K	5-10	198	10/27/69	13	Georgia
9	Rodney Peete	QB	6-0	230	3/16/66	15	Southern Cal
10	Todd Sauerbrun	P	5-10	211	1/4/73	9	West Virginia
16	Chris Weinke	QB	6-4	232	7/31/72	3	Florida State
17	Jake Delhomme	QB	6-2	205	1/10/75	5	Louisiana-Lafayette
20	DeShaun Foster	RB	6-0	222	1/10/80	2	UCLA
21	Terry Cousin	CB	5-9	181	3/11/75	7	South Carolina
23	Reggie Howard	CB	6-0	190	5/17/77	4	Memphis
24	Ricky Manning Jr.	CB	5-9	185	11/18/80	R	UCLA
27	Deon Grant	S	6-2	207	3/14/79	4	Tennessee
28	Colin Branch	S	6-0	203	3/2/80	R	Stanford
29	Dante Wesley	CB	6-1	211	4/5/79	2	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
30	Mike Minter	S	5-10	188	1/15/74	7	Nebraska
31	William Hampton	CB	5-10	190	3/7/75	2	Murray State
32	Rod Smart	RB	5-11	201	1/9/77	3	Western Kentucky
37	Nick Goings	RB	6-0	225	1/26/78	3	Pittsburgh
40	Jarrod Cooper	S	6-0	210	3/31/78	3	Kansas State
42	Travares Tillman	S	6-1	190	10/8/77	3	Georgia Tech
45	Brad Hoover	RB	6-0	242	11/11/76	4	Western Carolina
47	Marco Battaglia	TE	6-3	250	1/25/73	8	Rutgers
48	Stephen Davis	RB	6-0	230	3/1/74	8	Auburn
50	Vinny Ciurciu	LB	5-11	235	5/2/80	R	Boston College
52	Brian Allen	LB	6-0	232	4/1/78	3	Florida State
53	Greg Favors	LB	6-1	242	9/30/74	6	Mississippi State
54	Will Witherspoon	LB	6-1	234	8/19/80	2	Georgia
55	Dan Morgan	LB	6-2	233	12/19/78	3	Miami (FL)
56	Jason Kyle	LB	6-3	242	5/12/72	9	Arizona State
57	Lester Towns	LB	6-1	252	8/28/77	4	Washington
60	Jeff Mitchell	C	6-4	300	1/29/74	7	Florida
65	Kevin Donnalley	G	6-5	310	6/10/68	13	North Carolina
69	Jordan Gross	T	6-4	300	7/20/80	R	Utah
71	Matt Willig	T	6-8	315	1/21/69	12	Southern Cal
72	Bruce Nelson	G	6-5	301	5/12/79	R	Iowa
75	Todd Steussie	T	6-6	308	12/1/70	10	California
76	Tutan Reyes	G	6-3	299	10/28/77	4	Mississippi
77	Kris Jenkins	DT	6-4	315	8/3/79	3	Maryland
78	Jeno James	G	6-3	310	1/12/77	4	Auburn
79	Doug Brzezinski	G	6-4	305	3/11/76	5	Boston College
80	Eugene Baker	WR	6-2	183	3/18/76	2	Kent State
81	Ricky Proehl	WR	6-0	190	3/7/68	14	Wake Forest
84	Jermaine Wiggins	TE	6-2	255	1/18/75	4	Georgia
85	Kevin Dyson	WR	6-1	208	6/23/75	6	Utah
86	Kris Mangum	TE	6-4	249	8/15/73	6	Mississippi
87	Muhsin Muhammad	WR	6-2	217	5/5/73	8	Michigan State
88	Karl Hankton	WR	6-2	202	7/24/70	5	Trinity (IL)
89	Steve Smith	WR	5-9	179	5/12/79	3	Utah
90	Julius Peppers	DE	6-6	283	1/18/80	2	North Carolina
93	Mike Rucker	DE	6-5	275	2/28/75	5	Nebraska
94	Kindal Moorehead	DT	6-2	285	10/14/78	R	Alabama
96	Al Wallace	DE	6-5	258	3/25/74	4	Maryland
97	Kemp Rasmussen	DE	6-3	255	5/25/79	2	Indiana
98	Shane Burton	DT	6-6	305	1/18/74	8	Tennessee
99	Brentson Buckner	DT	6-2	305	9/30/71	10	Clemson

**Injured Reserve**

59	Mike Caldwell	LB	6-2	235	8/31/71	11	Middle Tennessee State
73	Melvin Tuten	T	6-7	320	11/11/71	7	Syracuse
82	Mike Seidman	TE	6-4	261	2/11/81	R	UCLA
83	Walter Young	WR	6-5	214	12/7/79	R	Illinois
83	Nathan Black	WR	6-0	190	6/20/78	2	Northwestern State
92	Kavika Pittman	DE	6-6	273	10/9/74	8	McNeese State
97	Giradie Mercer	DT	6-2	285	3/19/76	1	Marshall

**2003 Carolina Panthers Roster**

ABOUT THE EDITOR



Michelle White is a sports researcher based in Toronto, Ont.

She recently co-edited the books, *Greatest Moments in Vancouver Canucks Hockey History*, *The Heritage Classic: A celebration of the NHL's First Outdoor Game* and *Greatest Moments in Canada Hockey History*.

Thank You  
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