



LOCAL

# 1995: When NFL came to the Carolinas

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Running back Anthony Johnson (23) scores ag



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The Carolina Panthers opened play in the NFL in 1995. Home games were played at Clemson University’s “Death Valley,” while the stadium in Charlotte was under construction. Here’s what Scott Fowler wrote as the season was about to open in Atlanta (a 23-20 overtime loss) on Sept. 3, 1995:

Eight years after Jerry Richardson first hatched his dreamy scheme, two years after the NFL awarded Carolina its 29th franchise, one year before the uptown Charlotte stadium is ready, the Panthers play their first real game today.

If football is your thing, today will feel something like the night your dad gave you the car keys for the first time, or the day a child hugged your neck for no reason, or the morning you padded downstairs to find that Santa had managed to locate you at your grandma’s house.

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“Most bulldogs never catch that truck they are chasing,” said Max Muhleman, the sports marketing consultant who helped the Richardson family win the franchise. “And when one does, what a happy surprise that is.”

“The NFL once thought Charlotte was somewhere between ‘The Dukes of Hazzard’ and ‘Mayberry RFD,’ “ says Mike McCormack, now president of the Panthers.

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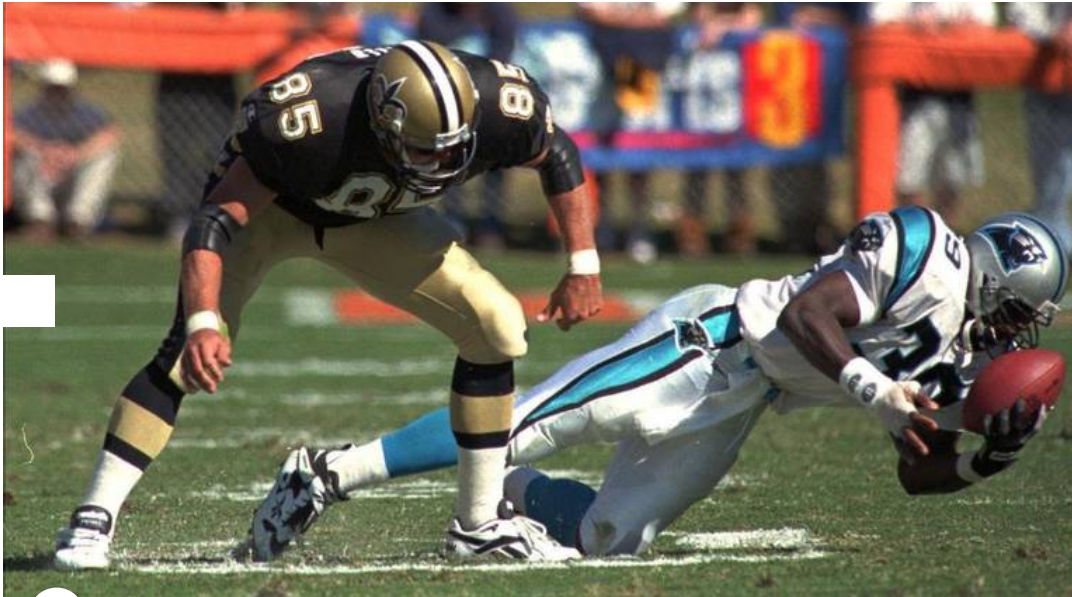
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Today, thousands of football fans around the Carolinas will make sure not to tarry too long in the church parking lot so they can grab a sandwich and flick their remote control promptly at 1 p.m. The texture of fall Sundays in the Carolinas is about to be altered forever.

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Panthers safety Brett Maxie (39) grabs an interception on a pass intended for New Orleans' Wesley Walls (85) at Clemson. DAVID FOSTER III *THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER*

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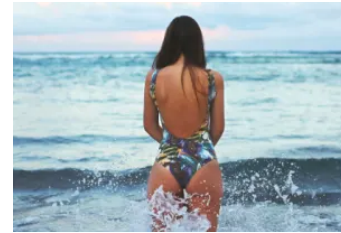


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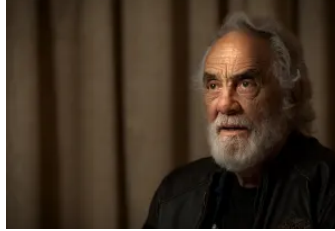
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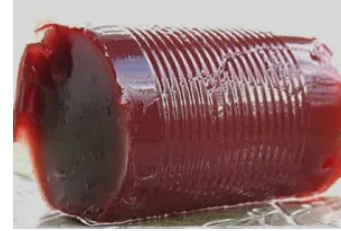
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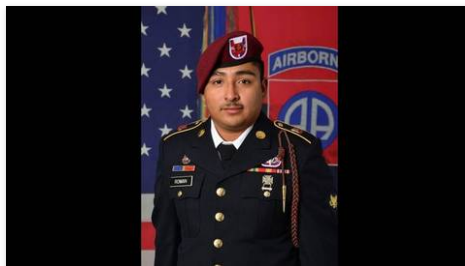
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