

# Sports

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NFL | ANALYSIS

## Blowout loss a reminder of the bad Young trade

STEVE REED

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE — Sunday's game served as yet another unneeded reminder for the Carolina Panthers of just how badly they botched the trade for Bryce Young in 2023 — and how far back it has set the franchise.

Caleb Williams threw for 304 yards and two touchdowns — both of those to former Carolina wide receiver D.J. Moore — as the Bears routed the Panthers 36-10 in Chicago.

Moore was part of the deal in which the Panthers also sent four draft picks to the Bears to move up to the No. 1 overall pick to acquire a franchise quarterback. But instead of taking C.J. Stroud, who went No. 2 overall to the Houston Texans and has experienced quick success, the Panthers took Young — and it has been a disaster ever since.

Young is 2-16 as an NFL starter and was benched just two games into the Dave Canales era for 36-year-old journeyman Andy Dalton.

Williams, meanwhile, displayed good pocket presence in the best game of his young career. Williams, of course, was taken No. 1 overall in this year's draft with a pick the Bears received from the Panthers after Carolina finished with an NFL-worst 2-15 record last season.

The Bears also added offensive tackle Darnell Wright and cornerback Tyrique Stevenson — both of whom are now starters — along with punter Tory Taylor as part of that trade haul that could haunt the Panthers for years.

Even more concerning is that hindsight is proving the Panthers may not have needed to make the move at all had they been able to develop their own quarterback.

The Panthers previously acquired Sam Darnold and Baker Mayfield — both former top-three draft picks — in trades with the New York Jets and Cleveland Browns, respectively, in an effort to shore up the QB position.

Both are now excelling with their current teams. Darnold has the unbeaten Minnesota Vikings atop the NFC North. Mayfield, one year after leading the Buccaneers to the playoffs, has thrown 11 touchdowns and two interceptions this season.

The Panthers (1-4), meanwhile, seem likely to miss the playoffs for the seventh straight season and their QB future still remains unsettled.

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H.S. FOOTBALL | WEEK 8 PREVIEW

## BACK ON THE FIELD



JOSH DULA, BIG RED SPORTS NETWORK

Freedom football players Tiras Walker (9), Lofton Parlier (75) and Andrew Leonard (13) celebrate after defeating East Burke in Fat Friday 50 in Morganton earlier this season.

### Freedom, East Burke return to action following hurricane, Draughn uncertain

JUSTIN EPLEY

Sports editor

It'll be in a different venue and with a scrambled schedule, but high school football will return to Burke County when Freedom hosts Northwestern 3A/4A Conference opponent Alexander Central this Friday at Patton High School in Morganton.

The Patriots were supposed to start NWC play at Hibriten on Oct. 4 and host the Cougars for Senior Night at FHS on Nov. 1, but the impact of Hurricane Helene has changed all of that. Instead, with Freedom's stadium on the mend after significant flooding and all conference games for Week 7 postponed, the Patriots will entertain Alexander Central on the other side

of town on Friday.

The Patriots lead Alexander Central 29-8 all-time, but fell 35-7 to end the season in Taylorsville last fall.

The last time Freedom (3-2) was on the field, it played arguably its best game of the season with a 63-13 nonconference thrashing of visiting Chase on Sept. 20. Junior quarterback Kaden Davis accounted for six touchdowns against the Trojans, finishing 7 of 9 for 234 yards and three TDs to Kobe Johnson (53 yards), Tiras Walker (66) and Justice Dominguez (61) while also cashing in on three short rushing touchdowns of 1, 6 and 1 yards as part of a 72-yard night on the ground. Cam Brown (15 and 5 yards) and Ian Clark (26

also had rushing TDs for FHS.

Alexander Central finished the nonconference portion of its schedule with a 2-3 record, winning versus Wilkes Central 54-14 and at North Iredell 28-19 while losing versus Statesville 36-21, at Burns 28-7 and versus Sun Valley 42-10.

ACHS is led by junior rushers Jeremiah Whitaker (51-479-4) and Sawyer Chapman-Mays (59-232-5). Senior quarterback Wade Queen has completed 20 of 42 passes for 230 yards, one touchdown and three interceptions while running 28 times for 154 yards and two scores. His favorite target is senior Garison Millsaps (6-115-1).

Prediction: Freedom.

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H.S. ROUNDUP

## Local sports restart with Freedom-Patton volleyball, 2 others

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Patton volleyball team returned to nonconference action following a two-week break due to Hurricane Helene, getting back into rhythm with a Senior Night sweep of visiting crosstown rival Freedom on Monday in Morganton, 25-23, 25-21, 25-19.

The Lady Panthers' seniors include Abigail Carpenter, Reece Edwards, Kate Clark and Anna Lynn Ripley.

Offensively, PHS (14-4) was led by Hannah Huggins (10 kills, six aces), Ripley (eight kills, four aces), Soraya Hartman (seven kills), Edwards (six kills, four aces), Clark (four kills, ace), Kynzlee Worley (two kills), Carpenter (kill, 24 assists), Carly Setterlind (kill, ace, four assists) and Emma Griffin (seven assists). The Patton

defense was paced by Setterlind (21 digs, 35 receptions), Carpenter (six digs), Clark (five digs, seven receptions), Ripley (five digs, 15 receptions), Edwards (five digs), Huggins (two digs, block), Griffin (dig, reception) and Hartman (reception).

The Lady Patriots (3-14) were led offensively by Kaitlyn Hagmann (five kills, two aces), Ava Whitaker (three kills, two aces), Madelyn LeMaster (kill, two aces), Kennedy Denton (kill, ace, six assists), Kaitlyn Taylor (kill), Mia Furches (kill) and Cassidy Taylor (ace). FHS' defensive leaders were Hagmann (five digs, block), Whitaker (two digs, block), Katie Settle (two digs), Denton (dig), Cassidy Taylor (dig) and Kaitlyn Taylor (dig).

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JOSH DULA, BIG RED SPORTS NETWORK

Freedom and Patton volleyball players shake hands during Monday's match in Morganton.