

**January 20, 2006**



An Interview With:

## **MIKE MINTER** **Carolina Panthers**

Q. (Inaudible.)

MIKE MINTER: Nothing, it would be the same thing. It's going to be exciting. Both teams are going to be ready, because if you win, you keep going. If you lose, you go home.

I think the difference that you always see is the **Super Bowl** is the only different game. Because at the end of that day, everybody is going home. That's the difference. But this Sunday will be the same as the previous two.

**Q. Coach Fox said this team likes to come out of the tunnel and get booed, and that's part of the reason for the success on the road. Why do you think that is?**

MIKE MINTER: It pumps you up when you feel like everybody is against you. There's something to prove that you want to go in and shut up 70, 80 thousand people. You kind of get a kick out of that, I guess, as a football player, and as a competitor. So you know what, it's always good when the odds are against you, and you come in and shut the crowd up, and you win. That's something that you thrive on.

**Q. Coach Fox called Jake Delhomme and Steve Smith the odd couple. They called each other an old, married couple earlier this week?**

MIKE MINTER: That's funny. They're definitely the odd couple. You're talking about somebody on two different ends of the spectrum, when you're talking about those two guys. **Steve Smith** is a cocky guy and has a chip on his shoulder. Jake is an old hometown guy, kind of quiet, the boy you bring home to meet the parents type thing.

So it's definitely the odd couple, when you talk about the two guys. But you know what, on the field, they're a match made in heaven. So I like to see that.

**Q. You've seen a lot of football, what's it been like to watch them work and watching the numbers they're putting up?**

MIKE MINTER: It's unbelievable. Both guys have really been dominating and really been playing well. And when we see that we know as a defense we're going to have a good day. When we see **Jake** doing his thing, and **Steve** making big plays, we know as a defense we can pay them back, and go get them and do what we do.

**Q. If you were on the Seattle defense, how would you be approaching the Delhomme/Smith combination right now?**

MIKE MINTER: I'd try to get a hit man out to get **Steve Smith**, make him not show up. That's the only way you're going to stop him. So really, that's the only thing that you can do, because we move him around so many different places. We've got him in the slot, we've got him out on 'X', we bring him in reverses. We throw a smoke route, he turns it into a 30 yard touchdown. It's so difficult to contain him. And then at the other end when you have **Drew Carter**, you have a running game that's hurting you, what are you going to do

**Q. What can you say about Nick Goings, that's coming into the same situation he came in last year, but now he's doing it in the Championship game?**

MIKE MINTER: We're excited. The great thing about this is we always say the good Lord prepares us before we get to that step. And we got prepared last season with Nick Goings. So we know what we can do. When we came in from one and seven and almost made it to the playoffs, he was the reason why. We know he can take us where we need to go in these next two weeks. We definitely have the utmost confidence. And he does, too, because he has done that before, and been in pressure situations. So this won't be anything.

**Q. How much of what this team went through last year has affected the success of**

...when all is said, we're done®

**FastScripts®** by ASAP Sports

t. 212.385.0297 f. 917.591.3417

visit our archives at [www.asapsports.com](http://www.asapsports.com)

**Mike Minter 1.20.06.doc**

**this season?**

MIKE MINTER: A whole lot, because of injuries and depth. And I think as a great football team, you've got to have depth. And right now, that's what we have, we have depth. And I think that's the difference between this team and '03. '03 we had great starters, but we didn't really have the great depth. And this year we have that.

**Q. What do you think about Seattle's defense? How is it different than the Bears and the Giants?**

MIKE MINTER: I don't know, man, I don't watch them. But the offense, the thing is that they're No. 2 in the League. They have the best running back in the game today. And I think they have the best offensive line that we can face. I think that's what you see. And then you see a quarterback that's got experience. The other two guys were young, first time being in the playoffs, and really first time being on that type of stage. And so now you have a guy that's been on that type of stage before and won on that type of stage. And this is the problems that they can pose for defenses. They can run the ball. They can throw the ball, and they've got a quarterback that can run and throw. That's a tough combination.

**Q. What is it about this team that kind of takes care of its business on the road and doesn't really net out of rhythm, same old, coach, you guys are creatures of habit in that regard?**

MIKE MINTER: I think you have to. You stick with what got you here. **Coach Fox** has done a great job of preparing us all season long for us stepping up on the road. He told us we have to be road warriors all year. And to go where we have to go, we have to win our fair share of road games. We didn't know he was going to be a prophet. We had to go on the road three weeks in a row in the playoffs and play well. And you know what, I think it's in your preparation. He does a great job of saying, guys, it's in your preparation. Prepare hard throughout the week, and no matter where you play then you'll be able to perform. And so I think that's the biggest thing. And the other thing is that we're a family. And when we travel we care about one another and we step on that field we know it's just us 40 some, 50 some guys that's out on the field, that we're together.

**Q. This is about as far a trip you can take. Does that take its toll on you?**

MIKE MINTER: I don't think so, we used to go to San Francisco all the time, back in the days when we had San Francisco in our division. You get over there, and you take care of your business.

I think Fox does a great job of keeping us on the same schedule as if we was on the east coast. We really don't make it a big deal. I think if you make it a big deal then it become that.

**Q. There's a lot of talk that this defense is better than the defense of two years ago. How much of that improvement is in the secondary?**

MIKE MINTER: Well, a whole lot. You've got two corners, I believe, will be the best two corners in the National Football League. They can shut down any receivers. And then you've got two veteran guys back there at safety that understands the game and are not going to make mistakes. And then if you get back there, you know you're going to get hit. So I think when you have a combination of two hawks on the outside, and what I call Marlon the Professor, because he takes notes better than anybody I've ever seen. And then you come in the zone and you get hit. So I think that's the combination you want as a secondary.

**Q. The game last year you guys came up with some pretty vicious hits. Was there something about that game and will we see it again this week?**

MIKE MINTER: Well, you know, hopefully you'll see it again. If we get that opportunity, you'll definitely get the chance to see that. But the biggest thing is just the electricity that comes out of playing in the NFC Championship game. The speed of the game picks up. So your collisions is going to be that much harder. And so you get a chance to get one, you definitely want to take advantage of that.

**Q. The first two playoff games you seemed to capitalize on the fact that you were going up against a pair of inexperienced quarterbacks. That's not going to be the case this week. How much of a difference is that going to make?**

MIKE MINTER: That's going to be a huge difference. You can't rattle this guy. This guy has been in this situation before. He's been playing in this League for a while. And he really understands the offense. He understands how to play football. And I think that's the biggest thing

...when all is said, we're done®

**FastScripts®** by ASAP Sports

t. 212.385.0297 f. 917.591.3417

visit our archives at [www.asapsports.com](http://www.asapsports.com)

**Mike Minter 1.20.06.doc**

that's going to be the biggest thing against him and the other two guys. He will know how to orchestrate his offense very, very well.