

What a Season It Was For Our Carolina Panthers and Our City!

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Last spring and summer, though, it was a different story. Injuries and preseason headlines led to low expectations for the Panthers. Many people didn't think this year's squad would amount to much. Then the whistle blew, the regular season started and the Panthers started to win. And they kept winning week in and week out.

Expectations for the Panthers built with each victory and, much like Charlotte, they continued to surprise the competition. In many ways, this team reflected Charlotte's can-do spirit. We are a place that has long been underestimated—all the way back to our roots as a critical player in the American Revolution—but one that continues to exceed expectations.

The Panthers competed not only against other

teams, but against the doubters who didn't think they had earned their success. They charged into the middle of the season, and then to the playoffs, continuing to beat the Vegas odds. That narrative played out in social media and on television as media crews arrived daily to tell the story of our team and our city.

Charlotte took advantage this opportunity in every way possible through earned media. Construction cranes at seven sites in Center City proudly flew enormous #KeepPounding banners. By night, our skyline was lit in Panthers blue. The pride for our team was palpable on the street level, too, from posters in our bus kiosks and on our newspaper racks to thousands of people who wore team colors and shared in the joy and excitement.

Our Center City's vibrancy was on full display for two home playoff games and the Panthers Pride Rally in Romare Bearden Park. The park was designed for just an occasion, providing a venue for 30,000 Panthers fans to offer a powerful send off for our team as they prepared for the Super Bowl. As the rally came to a close and the crowd roared for our Carolina Panthers, I was struck by the maturing of our community as a city.

Much like in city building, great seasons like 2015-16 create a winning culture that propels a team toward future success. The Panthers have been to the playoffs three years in a row, and this offseason, there will be new expectations. Skeptics will still bet against us. But a winning culture is hard to ignore. This was and is about far more than football.

– Panthers Pride Rally in Romare Bearden Park –

