

Sports Teams & Events

Sporting events always draw big crowds in the Charlotte area.

The Carolina Panthers (704-358-7800, www.panthers.com) took to the field as an NFL expansion team in 1995 and rose to a magical season in 2004, making their first-ever Super Bowl appearance against the New England Patriots. Their home, the natural-grass Bank of America Stadium, is located in Third Ward Uptown.

The NBA returned to Charlotte in 2004 thanks to Black Entertainment Television founder Robert Johnson. The **Charlotte Bobcats** (704-BOBCATS; www.nba.com/bobcats) play in the new Charlotte Arena in Uptown. The Charlotte Sting of the WNBA (704-424-WNBA, www.charlottesting.com) continues to delight fans each summer and moved to the Charlotte Arena in 2006.

The Charlotte Knights (704-36HOMER, www.charlotteknights.com), a farm club for the Chicago White Sox, have played baseball in the Charlotte area for more than 100 years. They currently play at Knights Stadium in Fort Mill but may move closer to the city soon. On the ice, the **Charlotte Checkers** (704-342-4ICE, www.gocheckers.com) are the East Coast Hockey League affiliates of the New York Rangers and the AHL's Hartford Wolf Pack. The team recently moved to the Charlotte Arena.

For soccer fans there are the **Charlotte Eagles**, a professional team in the second division of the United Soccer Leagues, and the **Lady Eagles**, who play in the Atlantic division of the USL's W league (704-841-8644, www.charlotteeagles.com). The season runs from April to August.

Other big sporting events include the **Charlotte Run for Peace and 10K** (www.charlotterunforpeace.com) in January and the **Queens Cup Steeplechase** in Mineral Springs in Union County (704-843-7070, www.queenscup.org) in April. In addition, there's the **Charlotte Ultraswim** in June (704-846-5335, www.justswimmac.org/ultraswim). **The Continental Tire Bowl** brought the excitement of a college football bowl game to the Carolinas and has recently been changed to the Meineke Car Care Bowl. Played at Bank of America Stadium and featuring the ACC and Big East Conference, the game draws a crowd of more than 70,000.

In May 2003, **Wachovia** first sponsored the **PGA** tour to Charlotte at Quail Hollow Country Club, which has welcomed such golfing greats as Tiger Woods and Phil Mickleson (800-945-0777, www.wachoviachampionship.com). In September, the sky's the limit for the **National Hot Air Balloon Rally** (704-873-2892, www.statesvillechamber.org) near Statesville.

NASCAR races roar at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Concord, including the **Coca-Cola 600** and the **Nextel All-Star Challenge** in May and the **UAW-GM Quality 500** in October (704-455-3200, www.lowesmotorspeedway.com). Racing excitement spills from the speedway into uptown Charlotte during Speed Week each May. You can enjoy a parade, fireworks, entertainment, food and special events leading up to the races.

The **Charlotte Regional Sports Commission** (704-332-7717, www.charlottesports.org) sponsors other sporting events in the Charlotte area, like the Citgo Bassmaster Classic at Lake Wylie in 2004. The commission also works to bring in sports organizations and teams, which contribute millions to the local economy and enhance the area's overall quality of life.

