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(Big) Easy street: Q&A with Hornets center Tyson Chandler

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Stan McNeal

SN: If someone told you on opening night that the Hornets would have the best record in the Western Conference at the halfway point, what would you have said?

CHANDLER: I didn't necessarily think we'd be No. 1, but I figured we'd be a top four or top five team. We had a lot of injuries last season, and this season we've been healthy. While we're still young, we've worked hard and improved. We're getting great play from Chris Paul, and we have a lot of the right pieces to be a really good team.

SN: One key has been an ability to win on the road. The Hornets started 15-7 away from home this season after going 15-26 last season. What's the difference?

CHANDLER: A young team will allow the crowd to overwhelm them, but we've grown up. A hostile situation doesn't get us down like it could have in the past. We've been through it enough now that we know what it's like.

SN: How much does the Bulls' decision to go with Ben Wallace instead of you motivate you?

CHANDLER: The way I see it, they gave up on me and I allowed that to happen. When I first came here, I wanted to prove the Bulls wrong, but I got over that in a hurry. I thought, *Now it's time to stand up and look in the mirror.* I'm not going to blame anyone for what happened. But I will say I'm definitely glad I'm not there now.

SN: Your scoring is up to 12.1 points per game to go with your 12.4 rebounds, and you're leading the league in offensive rebounds. How have you improved your offense?

CHANDLER: Last year, I scored almost all of my points on putbacks. This season, I've got more of an understanding of how to score and how to put myself in position to score. I'm getting some plays called for me, I'm scoring off alley-oops off the pick-and-roll and I'm still getting offensive rebounds.

SN: You look pretty stylish in that top hat on TysonChandler.com. Are you a big hat guy?

CHANDLER: I'm a big fashion guy. It's a way I like to express myself outside of basketball. I'm definitely a good shopper. I will say I'm one of the best-dressed players in the NBA.

SN: You also are pretty good at changing diapers, having an infant daughter, Sasha-Marie. Does that come from getting a lot of practice?

CHANDLER: That comes from realizing the more comfortable I can keep my daughter, and the quicker I can get the job done, the less embarrassing it will be. I was changing her in a restaurant and I figured if she's not comfortable, she's going to start screaming and someone's going to think I'm trying to hurt her or something.

SN: Is there one restaurant you'd recommend to anyone going to New Orleans?

CHANDLER: Emeril's on Tchoupitoulas Street. Fine menu.

SN: You've got a great chance to make the Western Conference All-Star team (reserves will be announced

Thursday), but if you don't, will you still spend the weekend in New Orleans?

CHANDLER: If we can keep winning, maybe I can be added. Seems like winning teams in the past have gotten more than one player. But if I don't make it, I'll be out of here. I'll probably be in the Caribbean.

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