

The Two that Made the Difference for the Bulls

By LANGSTON WERTZ

Donnell Johnson is 6-6 and 315 pounds. Greg Clifton is maybe 6-1 and maybe 180 pounds, if you weighed him with his Johnson C. Smith uniform on.

Clifton can run the 40-yard dash in 4.2 seconds. Really.

Johnson? Well, he can run it, too. Just don't time him.

These two are or were teammates on the Bulls football team last season, two of the main reasons why Smith turned around a program that had gone 2-16-1 under two coaches in the past two years.

The Bulls finished 5-5 this season and had not N.C. Central made an improbable 80-yard drive in the final minute of Smith's season-finale in Durham, N.C., the Bulls would've had a winning record.

But being teammates is about all that Clifton and Johnson had in common. Sure they were friends but Johnson's so big, so talented, so mean. Friends call him El Dog! Clifton's so slim, so swift so, well, just so darned regular. He gives hope to those of us who watch sports. Hey, he's just like us.

Clifton's nickname is Smoke.

And now, the two are about to take the biggest steps in their athletic careers, and the two could possibly gain one more thing in common.

They could both be professional football players.

You see, this is a story about dreams.

With the NFL draft only going eight rounds seep, very few small schools players were drafted. In fact, Terrance Warren

of Hampton was the only CIAA player drafted. He was taken in the late rounds by Seattle. So, what they left, for CIAA hopefuls, was something these hopefuls call "The Free Agent route."

It's a kin to walking onto a college team, trying to prove to the coach you're good enough to be out there with the big boys, even though you don't come in with a heavy reputation.

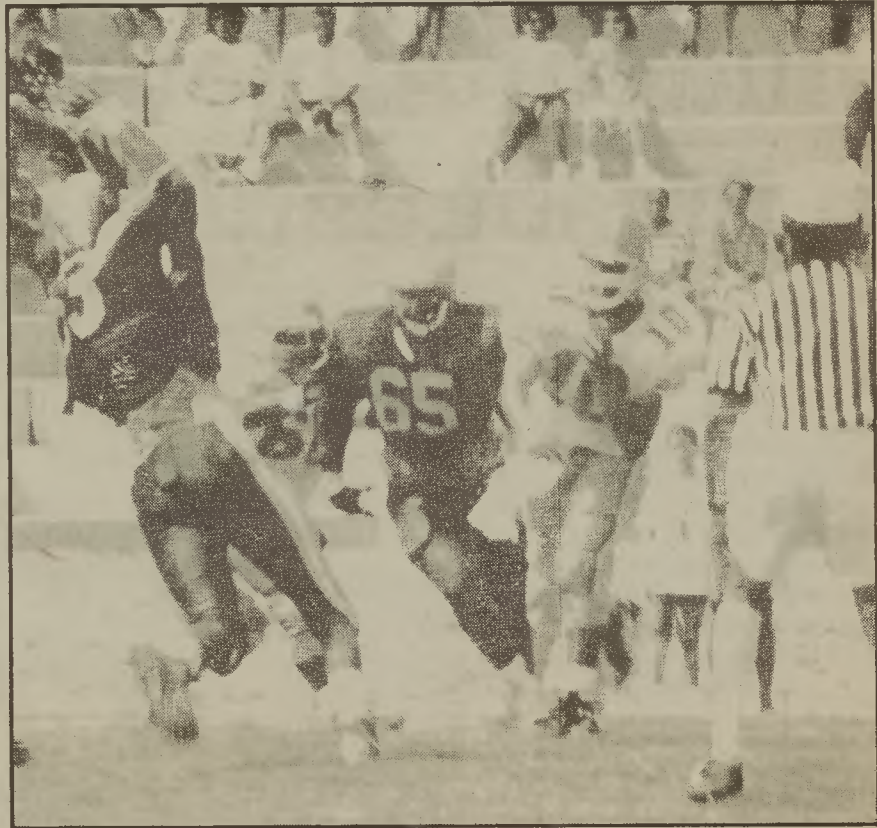
Rodney Houndshell of Virginia Union went the free agent route, signing with Cleveland for an undisclosed amount. Johnson signed a \$100,000 contract with Cincinnati that paid him a \$2,500 signing bonus. And Clifton, a wide receiver, signed with The Team That Needs Some Wideouts, those Redskins in Washington. Clifton when for a reported \$115,000 with an undisclosed signing bonus.

To get those long dollars, Houndshell, Johnson and Clifton will have to make their respective teams. It's not easy. One NFL reporter at a major metropolitan newspaper estimated that just three out of every 10 free agents make the teams they sign with.

Johnson, though, figures his chances are at least 70%.

"I'm really excited," Johnson said. "I've just got to make the team now. But the defensive line coaches really liked me when I worked out for them" before the draft.

Johnson comes from a football family. His uncle, Cecil, played linebacker with Tampa Bay. and Maybe this is Johnson's destiny. After all, when he was born, he was 9 pounds, 13 ounces and 23



Johnson and Clifton turned J.C. Smith into a winner.

1/2 inches long. He was so big that his mother, Mildred Johnson, injured her back while trying to produce him.

And Johnson, through the years, has continued to grow. "His feet grew so fast when he was growing up," Mildred Johnson says, "that I just felt like cutting his feet off sometimes."

If Johnson can make the Bengals, he

won't have to worry about shoe sizes or what brand of shoes he wears for that matter. And if he does, and he says he will make the team, he already knows what he's going to do.

"This is my chance, well, it's my first chance," he said. "I'll do the best I can. It'll give me a chance to help out my family, you know?" Yeah, we know.

Letters

Regarding the so-called alumni rumblings, I don't believe that an Alcornite would stoop low enough to conspire with B. Duane to try and get rid of me. I know that conspirators make some strange bed-fellows, but an Alcornite would have to look up to see the toe of a footless snail to conspire with B. Duane.

B. Duane's Inquirer approach to make a point, giving no fellow conspirator's names, makes his conclusions look like Inquirer conclusions, as all I-i-e-s!

What Alcornite would conspire with a person who implies that only a Caucasian mind can get a job done? What Alcornite would conspire with a person who still thinks white is right and black get back? Only one looking up at that snail's toe, and I don't believe that for a minute!

As for the push to get white SIDs into the SWAC, B., that is another I-i-e! The last white SID in the SWAC, at Alabama State, was replaced by a black, Peter Forest, in December. She couldn't keep stats, didn't know how to layout press guides, couldn't write sports articles, couldn't do anything. She lasted only three months, B.

Duane.

B., did you know that there are black SIDs at predominately white institutions? Just call Old Dominion when you get the time. But, I forgot, your opinions aren't based on fact, just emotional bigotry.

For B. Duane to say that only a white spokesman qualifies as a 'real SID' is a disgrace to the integrity of all black SIDs in the USA and also to the *Vicksburg Post*. How can they have so narrow minded a person on their staff representing them.

Who told B. about a push to get white players? The push is to get the best available athlete. When McNair was recruited, do you think ASU would have turned him down to sign a non-black of lesser talent? Get with the program B. Duane!

I'm so glad that one of my brothers, Paul Howard Jr. in Atlanta, is a lawyer. I do believe that a law suit against B. Duane is in order. To call me less-than-adequate is slander Mr. B. Unless I get an apology, or unless B. is reprimanded in some way by the *Post* superiors, we'll just have to meet in court, and we won't be playing basketball.

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B. says McNair's stats are due to him passing a lot. Well smart person, he is a quarterback! Ty Metmer was a quarterback. Ware at Houston was a quarterback. McNair at this stage in his career ranks above them, and they won the Heisman.

Duane's stats on McNair are a pack of I-i-e-s! McNair had 29 touchdown passes in '92, not 27 passes intercepted. He had only 15 picked off. B. Duane can't make a point without distorting the truth, in other words, lying.

B., I talk to the pro scouts who rate the quarterbacks and others. McNair to them is another Randall Cunningham or Steve Young. The only person rating Eric Zeire or Heath Shuler over McNair is B. Duane. And his opinion doesn't matter to the SWAC, nor true sports fans, nor the scouts, nor the voting sportswriters nor Alcornites.

Duane didn't cover a Brave game in '92 that I can recall. He didn't cover a basketball game or a baseball game. How can he write about what he hasn't seen? He hasn't even seen McNair and he's 50 minutes away from Lorman.

I hope B. speaks for only his misguided self and not the entire sports department of the Post. If the so-called 'home' newspaper can't be positive about the University athletic program, then we sure don't need that person with the poison pen spreading the negative at our events.

Finally, B., my plan was derived from information obtained from fellow SID's at GEorgia, Southern Cal and Notre Dame. I rely on ideas from fellow SID's who have promoted Heisman candidates. B. Duane's lies are drawn from airwaves.

Alcornites should know that B. Duwane is the same reporter who cares nothing about Alcorn possibly closing. That came up in a Peace Pipe Preview press conference in Vicksburg, and his only remark was about Steve quarterbacking afterwards up at Ms. State.

No one can convince me that an Alcornite would conspire with a person who doesn't care if the University fails to exist.

Gus Howard-SID