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Linemen Really Do Have A Lot To Worry About

BY JACSON LOWE
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

It seems offensive linemen never receive due credit for one of the toughest jobs on the gridiron. Last year's North Carolina front line received an extra pounding in the 1992 preseason, mainly surrounding the group's lack of experience.

What a difference 365 days can make. The 1993 Tar Heel line features four returning senior starters and junior tight end Greg DeLong, a starter in all 12 games last season. If sophomore center Pat Conneely can step in for third-team All-American Randall Parsons, the Tar Heels can look back at the skeptics and smile.

"We all came in as freshmen together, were redshirted together and have worked together for five years," senior tackle Ethan Albright said. "Even though last year we caught some heat for not being experienced, we actually have worked together a lot."

In fact, the only rookie figuring into the offensive line scheme is first-year coach Eddie Williamson. Williamson joins UNC after a two-year stint as Bill Dooley's offensive coordinator at Wake Forest. He also feels that experience will pay off for the front line down the stretch.

"The offensive line is a very technique-oriented, very assignment-oriented position and that makes experience a big plus," Williamson said. "The more experiences you've been in, the better you are able to react to a situation or make an adjustment if needed."

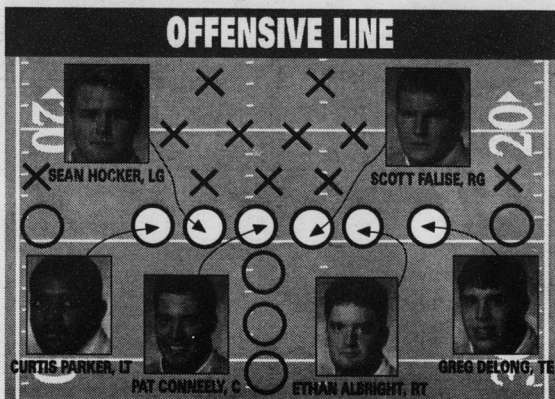
"As an offensive lineman, most of the time no one knows you are out there, save your mother or girlfriend," Williamson added. "There has to be a special bond between that group."

One facet of the offensive line that needed revamping, according to Williamson, was strength conditioning. The Tar Heels looked to another new face on the staff to help remedy the problem.

"As a group, I thought our body strength was a little down," Williamson said. "Our new strength coach Jeff Madden has done a great job in increasing their body strength level and their power level."

"We have a lot of young running backs this year, so it's going to be a little more responsibility on the offensive line to hold the blocks longer and make the holes a lot bigger," senior guard Shawn Hocker said. "It's a matter of getting adapted to their style, and hopefully it'll be a nice marriage between the offensive line and the running backs."

Williamson feels that no matter who the running back, the Tar Heel line knows what it must do to get the runner to the



DTH FILE PHOTO

Curtis Parker is one of the ACC's top offensive tackles

defensive secondary.

"What you hope you can do is get any quality running back to the line of scrimmage untouched so he can make his cut," he said. "Whether its Natrone (Means, former Tar Heel standout), Curtis (Johnson), Leon (Johnson) or whoever, you don't want those people to have to make a cut in the backfield because of a missed block."

If Sunday's blowout of USC is any indi-

cation of how the team will block on the season, Williamson knows exactly what he is talking about. North Carolina running backs consistently found holes the size of small countries to run through en route to a 312-yard performance.

Albright, a 6-foot-6, 280-pound Greensboro native, will be joined on the right side by fellow senior Scott Falise (6-3, 265). Both started all eleven regular-season games last year.

Albright was a member of the 1992 Academic All-ACC Football Team and member of the Dean's List during the fall of 1992 and has made impressive strides since moving to tackle from tight end after the 1990 season.

Falise was named ACC Offensive Lineman of the Week after a September 5 victory over Wake Forest last year. The Tar Heel backfield followed Falise and his fellow linemen into the end zone a season-

high five times on opening day.

Hocker lines his 6-4, 280-pound frame up on the left side alongside 1992 second-team All-ACC tackle Curtis Parker. Both players figure to be in the running for post-season awards. According to Williamson, Parker is at-or-near 100 percent after surgery March 1 to repair his dislocated left shoulder.

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