

Hardest Hitters Reside in Secondary

Walker Leads Defensive Backs

BY ZACHARY ALBERT
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

When the football is thrown deep against UNC, crowds hold their collective breaths.

The Kenan supporters cross fingers in hopes that the Tar Heel secondary that held Virginia's conference-best passing game to just 102 yards last year responds.

Opposing fans wish for the UNC coverage that was ripped for 361 yards on 23 of 25 passing attempts from N.C. State's Terry Jordan a year ago.

Obviously, consistency is a question mark for the secondary, isn't it?

"I think it's unfair to say much critical about our secondary against State even though we didn't play well," UNC head coach Mack Brown said. "We had two starters who didn't play and had a lot of young guys who hadn't played at all.

"Hopefully what we learned after injuries with the extra playing time last year around the State game will help us this year."

Well, this is now and the secondary has responded early. The deep coverage team of Sean Boyd, Sean Crocker, Bracey Walker and Lawrence Winslow showed its poise in the season opener.

Against Southern Cal, the UNC deep men broke up four passes and made 22 tackles. As a result, most of the Trojans' passes were short, tallying only 167 yards.

However, the four backs that roam long-ball land have had to adjust to some different positions this year. Walker, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound senior, moved from strong to free safety in the spring, a position he played as a freshman.

"I believe it was done so I could get in the action more," Walker said. "Being the free safety, I have a better pathway of running to the ball, instead of having to take on a lot of blockers."

It's frightening to think Walker might have a better path to the ball, enabling him to deliver more crushing blows to ball carriers.

Being in the action was Walker's forte last year. His punt blocks and explosive hits gave him national notoriety in the Peach Bowl, where he was named Defensive Most Valuable Player for the game.

"That was kind of a turning point for me," Walker said. "I had been playing pretty well in the regular season, but the Peach Bowl was postseason. That game really boosted my confidence to another level."

His teammates are glad that Walker is

on their side. When asked which player on the team they would not like to get hit by, many Tar Heels surveyed gave Walker's name.

Walker said he has become so used to issuing out pops to opponents, he can tell when he's struck fear in someone.

"After you hit someone and you see their eyes get big as quarters, you can tell that they're scared right then saying, 'God, this guy's trying to kill me,'" Walker said.

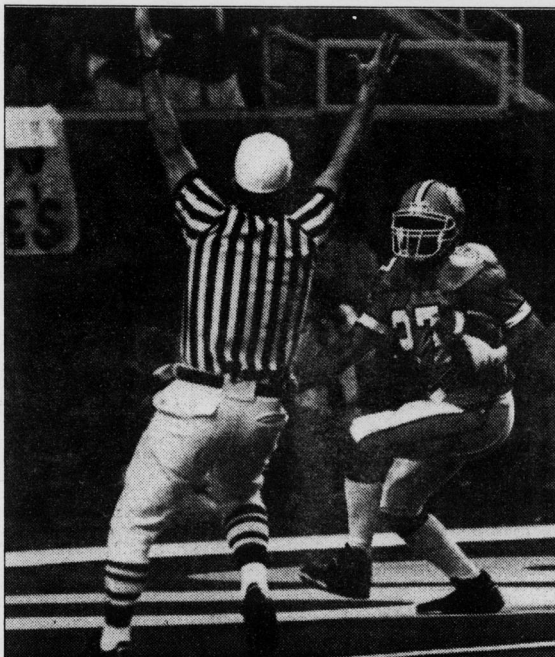
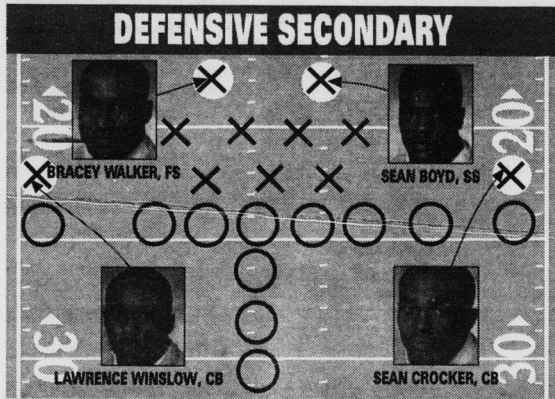
The head-cracking school of thought

has flowed over to his secondary companions. Boyd, a 6-3, 195-pound strong safety, who is also Walker's roommate, said that he is ready to take over a starting role in this, his sophomore year.

"Bracey has got that hitting mentality," Boyd said. "I'm hoping that it will rub off on me and maybe I can be the next hitter when he leaves."

"I'm just building on what I did in the

Please See SECONDARY, Page 20



Bracey Walker likes to intimidate opposing players with his hard hits. DTH FILE PHOTO

GOOD LUCK, HEELS!



COME BY
GRANVILLE TOWERS
ON FRANKLIN ST. &
CHECK OUT OUR
FANTASTIC
LOCATION.

**STAY WITH
US AND YOUR
RENT NEVER
INCREASES!**

CALL US FOR AVAILABILITY!

**University Square
929-7143**

