

John Daw: diminutive but deadly

by Jim Thomas
Assistant Sports Editor

"The Longest Yard," starring Burt Reynolds, was playing at the local movie theater in Columbia, S. C. on the eve of the Tar Heel's game with the "other" Carolina.

The long line was waiting to get into the 9 o'clock show as Charles Waddell, Ken Huff, Mark Cantrell and John Daw emerged from the darkness dressed in Carolina blue. Up and down the line people could be heard whispering to each other, "Aren't they Carolina football players?" As Daw passed, one old lady with her husband pointed at him and said in a grandmotherly voice, "Look at that little boy. Isn't he cute?"

At 5-7, 155-pounds, with his boyish face and red hair, Daw looks more like a kewpie doll than a starting defensive back on a major college football team. But Daw takes such comparisons in stride. Ever since the eighth grade, when he announced at the breakfast table "I'm going to play with the big boys some day," he has been chided about his lack of size.

"A lot of people said I was too small to play high school football," Daw said Thursday in his Ehringhaus dormitory

room. "When I said I wanted to play college football a lot of people turned their heads and snickered and thought I would get hurt so much that I would lose interest and quit. I did it because I wanted to prove you don't have to be 6-4, 230-pounds to play major college football."

Encouraged by his parents and his coach, who told him "If you try and fail you have nothing to be ashamed of," Daw reported as a walk-on his freshman year. He managed to raise a few eyebrows on the junior varsity squad, intercepting a few passes, and earned a scholarship. But then, just when he began to feel he had made it, he was red-shirted his sophomore season.

"I thought about quitting," said Daw. "It looked like I would be on the team for four years and never get a chance to play. It was enough to discourage anybody. But I made myself a promise the harder and tougher it got the more I would try."

As a member of the varsity last fall, Daw practiced behind Ronny Johnson at cornerback, learning the defense, and lifting weights to improve his strength. When the coaching staff moved Johnson to strong safety, he was given a shot at the first string job. He was running ahead of Francis Winters in spring practice when he separated

his shoulder. By the time he returned Winters had taken over the position.

"Francis was looking a lot better than I had been," said Daw, "but then he was ruled academically ineligible. My first thought was it will hurt the team but then I started thinking I'll just have to take up the slack. The coaching staff has faith in me. I hope I don't disappoint them."

Although he admits he had a poor game against Virginia last week, Daw has been able to hold his own this season against opposing tight ends who sometimes outweigh him as much as 100 pounds. Against Ohio State he led the team in tackles with 14.

"I play scared all the time," Daw said of the weighty proposition. "If I'm scared it's easier to get psyched up and I can do the job better. I know they're thinking 'I'm going to smash him' because of my size, but if they're overconfident that's in my favor."

Daw has had his share of bumps and bruises but now, he said it all seems worth it. "I've had some trying times, but I wouldn't give up the friends I've made or the experiences I've had for anything," he said. "It's been a great thrill to play with these guys. I can't wait to play Notre Dame. I've been dreaming about it ever since I was a little kid."



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Billy Murphy disillusioned with jock image

by Jim Gentry
Staff Writer

"The majority of people don't like football players because they don't know them. They think we have things easier..." Billy Murphy said little can be done to change that "jock image."

Murphy, however, a 6-1, 215-lb. linebacker from Lincolnton may be a counter-image to the stereotyped football player. The easy-going junior admits the publicity he has received for his defensive performances this season are nice but has reservations about talking football.

"Everyone gets a bad feeling about you," he said, "and I'm afraid I might offend someone and get them pissed off at me. People don't get to know us (football

players) as well as they do the basketball players, because there're more of us. Besides, Carolina is a basketball school for the most part and we aren't looked up to as much."

In fact, a major reason in Murphy's decision to attend Carolina came from seeing Tar Heel basketball games on television.

"I used to watch the basketball team play on TV," he said, "and I liked the way they hustled and fought. Plus, when other schools were recruiting me, they were always knocking Carolina, telling me I'd never get to play here. Carolina didn't do that. They always had something to say about other schools I mentioned."

I have a hard time going to class," Murphy said with a broad grin. "It's tough to be a student-athlete and that may be a reason



UNC linebacker Billy Murphy

some people don't like football players. They don't understand how tough football is on a person. Sometimes it's two or three days before I recover from a game."

Murphy went on to say that most professors at Carolina are understanding of the situation and let football players make up missed work.

"Maybe we have it easier in that respect," he said, "but any student that's sick can talk

to a professor and get the same treatment. I usually talk to teachers at the beginning of the semester and tell them I may miss some classes."

Admitting that "football gets old," Murphy tries to leave the sport on the field and forget about football at night. "A lot of talk gets on my nerves," he said. "It's a long season."

Murphy is responsible for calling defensive signals relayed from the sideline during the game. "There's some pressure in calling defenses, because if they don't hear me I get blamed," he said.

Turning to the Notre Dame contest, Murphy appreciates the opportunity to play against a team of the Irish's caliber. "It'll be a great thing playing against them," he said, "and will be my only chance to face them. I'm looking forward to it."

Murphy contends football has made him a better person. "I've had to change some," he said, "from being around people of different backgrounds. You have to adjust to the ways of people you meet and playing football has given me the chance to meet a lot of people."

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