

Jackson set to fill No. 1 job

By BILL FIELDS
Sports Editor

Bill Jackson and Darrell Nicholson once formed a potent linebacker duo at North Forsyth High School in Winston-Salem, but since arriving at North Carolina two years ago, only Nicholson has demonstrated the type of ability he showed as a prep star.

Nicholson's been a two-year starter at an inside linebacker position. Jackson, who did not have the size to continue as a collegiate linebacker, has endured two seasons of action on jayvee teams, special teams and as a reserve defensive back.

The two will reunite when the Tar Heel defense takes the field against Furman Saturday in the 1980 season-opener. Nicholson will continue to start at inside linebacker, while Jackson will be the starting strong safety, a slot occupied in 1979 by Ricky Barden.

For Jackson, the transition from high school star to college reserve to college starter has been something he's tried to take in stride.

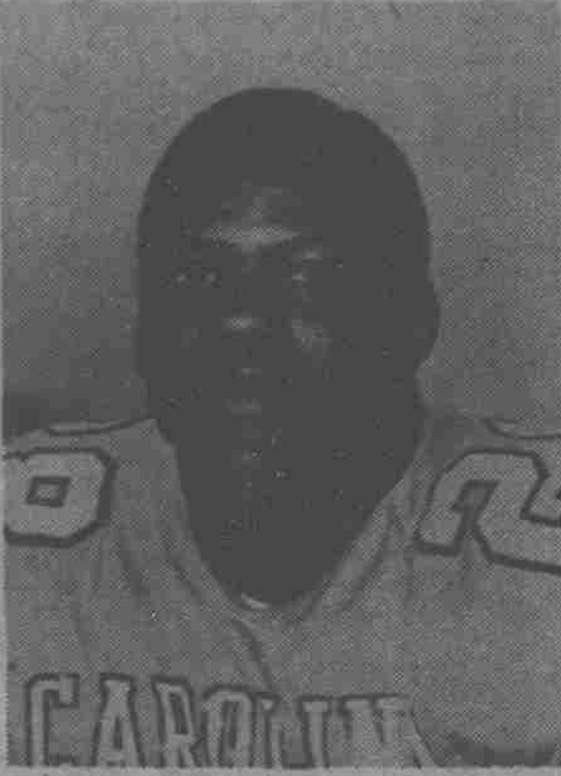
"When I was in high school, I played a lot," Jackson said Tuesday. "And when I came here I sat on the bench. It was something I had to get used to."

Jackson will be joined in the secondary by senior free safety Steve Streater, senior open-side cornerback Tyress Bratton and closed-side cornerback Greg Poole, a sophomore. Streater and Bratton were starters a year ago, but Poole—like Jackson—saw his playing time on the specialty teams.

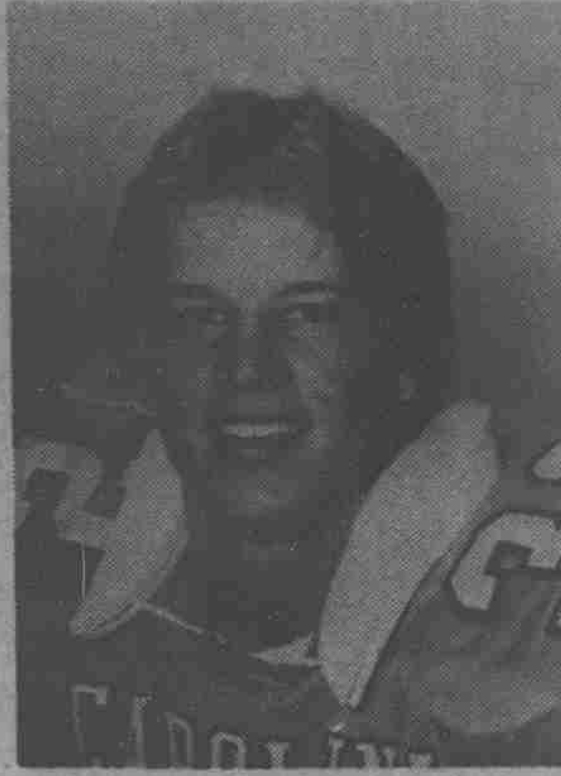
UNC coach Dick Crum said that while Poole and Jackson lack game experience, he has confidence in them. "He's an intelligent individual," Crum said of Poole. "You can see in him a player that is well aware of the total picture on the field."

Of Jackson, Crum said, "Billy Jackson gives you a little different kind of strong safety. Billy is taller and more of a problem to throw over than Ricky (Barden) was."

Jackson, who Crum said was "a step slower," than Barden, "needs experience and the only way you get it is by playing."



Bill Jackson



Greg Poole

Playing a lot would suit Jackson, who said he's trying to avoid comparisons with Barden.

"I feel good—confident I can do the job," he said. "I don't feel I have to be as good as him. If I play my game, up to my capabilities, I can get the job done. I'm bigger, more physical than him."

In addition to being hampered by a change in position, Jackson had to deal with surgery for a torn cartilage in his left knee as a freshman. He said Nicholson helped him through that experience, as well as with the difficulties of being a substitute.

"When I came here, I thought I would play a lot. But I found out differently. I had to wait my turn. Me and Nick, we're brothers. We stick close to each other. When he was starting and I wasn't, he talked to me. He told me I would get my chance."

The Carolina secondary figures to be tested early during the Furman game, as the Paladins probably will throw at the inexperienced Jackson and Poole.

Crum said he was glad the backfield would be tried out then rather than three weeks into the season. As far as Jackson is concerned, he has no qualms about

the opening game.

"It's a different feeling because I'm starting," Jackson said. "I feel that (the defense) will be better because we have eight starters coming back and they're used to all the situations that come up in the game."

NOTES: Coach Dick Crum, who has stressed the need for the Tar Heels to be wary of every team on the schedule, said he believed the team has "a healthy respect" for Furman... Crum expressed confidence in sophomore starting quarterback Rod Elkins. "I would expect him to have a good football game," Crum said. "He's a very calm individual..."

The Heels, aside from the loss of Chuck Sharpe at quarterback, "are sound physically," Crum said... Crum said the defense would probably be a little stronger than the offense in the opener, but noted that's usually the case with any team at the start of the season...

Crum, asked about being ranked highly in preseason polls, said, again Tuesday "you've got to prove that on Saturday."

Kiffin's antics bring laughter, but Wolfpack is after victories

By BILL FIELDS
Sports Editor

* Sixth in a series

RALEIGH—N.C. State seems to have a penchant for picking head football coaches with interests in more than the Xs and Os of the Power-I.

In the early '70s there was Lou Holtz, who made like Houdini and once performed his bag of tricks with Johnny Carson looking over one shoulder. As the Wolfpack enters the '80s, it's Monte Kiffin leading the way, the man who appears ready to take the lead role if the Lone Ranger TV series stages a comeback.

Seriously, though, Holtz could coach, as his 33-12-3 record in four seasons attests. And for Kiffin, who took the job last December replacing Bo Rein, who later died in a tragic plane crash after taking over at LSU, it will be coaching talent, not comic relief that will please Wolfpack supporters.

N.C. State was 7-4 last year and turned down a bid to the Garden State Bowl because the date of the game conflicted with semester examinations. The Pack has been picked to finish near the bottom of the Atlantic Coast Conference this year, and Kiffin, a large man who likes to wear boots, jeans and western shirts, says he's aware of the problems.

"It is an unpredictable football team," Kiffin said recently. "I don't know what these kids can do under pressure."

As is the case at Clemson, youth on the offense—particularly in the interior line—poses perhaps Kiffin's biggest worry. Gone from last year's team are All-America center and Outland Trophy winner Jim Ritcher and both starting guards: Chris Dieterich and Chuck Stone.

"To be a good football team, you've got to be good down the middle," Kiffin said. "We've got to come through with a green offense line."

However, two players Kiffin is counting on are returning starting tackles from last year's 259-pound Chris Koehn and 266-pound Chris Carr.

"I think I have to take it upon myself to be a leader," Koehn, who, like Carr, is a junior, said. "I think the potential is there. It's going to take a little while to get together, but I'm sure we can do it." Kiffin is confident, and as he looks on the line in the backfield, inexperience shows again. Sophomore Tom Avery, a 6-foot-6-pounder, has the big task of replacing the departed Scott Smith.

Avery did not play varsity ball a year ago, but was the star of State's 1980 spring game, throwing for 181 yards and leading his team to a win. Last week, in the Wolfpack's final full scrimmage before its opener against William & Mary, Avery scored three touchdowns, one on a 29-yard run.

"Avery is a competitor," Kiffin said. "He doesn't talk a lot, but when he steps in the huddle, those kids' heads pop up. I like that."

Avery will have talent when he looks

to pass or hand-off. The receiving corps is headed by junior split end Mike Quick, who caught 30 passes for 524 yards in 1979. Another senior, 6-foot Curtis Rein, will start at the other wide spot, with Lin Dawson, ignored at times last season, at tight end.

Seniors Wayne McLean and Dwight Sullivan, and sophomore Andre Marks will see most of the action in the backfield.

On defense, strength should come from end David Horning, tackle Bubba Green and cornerback Donnie McGrade.

Kiffin gained fame at Nebraska, where he molded top-notch defensive units. Most recently, he was a defensive assistant to Holtz at Arkansas.

"Coach works with the offense a lot, but he always knows what we're doing," Horning said. "He's responsible for a lot of the defense most colleges are playing right now."

While Kiffin insists his shenanigans—such as riding a white horse across campus to solicit support for the spring game—are not gimmicks, but merely part of his personality, they've drawn attention. Neither he nor his players seem to mind.

"I think there has to be some fun in a game," Kiffin said. "You have to be yourself."

So don't be surprised to see Kiffin in a continuing role as the Lone Ranger, but if the Wolfpack doesn't win, he could be looking for a certain sidekick for support.

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OFFICE - WALL, Jackson Brownie was great. Thanked Went to make sure you know how much I really care for you. Missed you this summer. August.

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