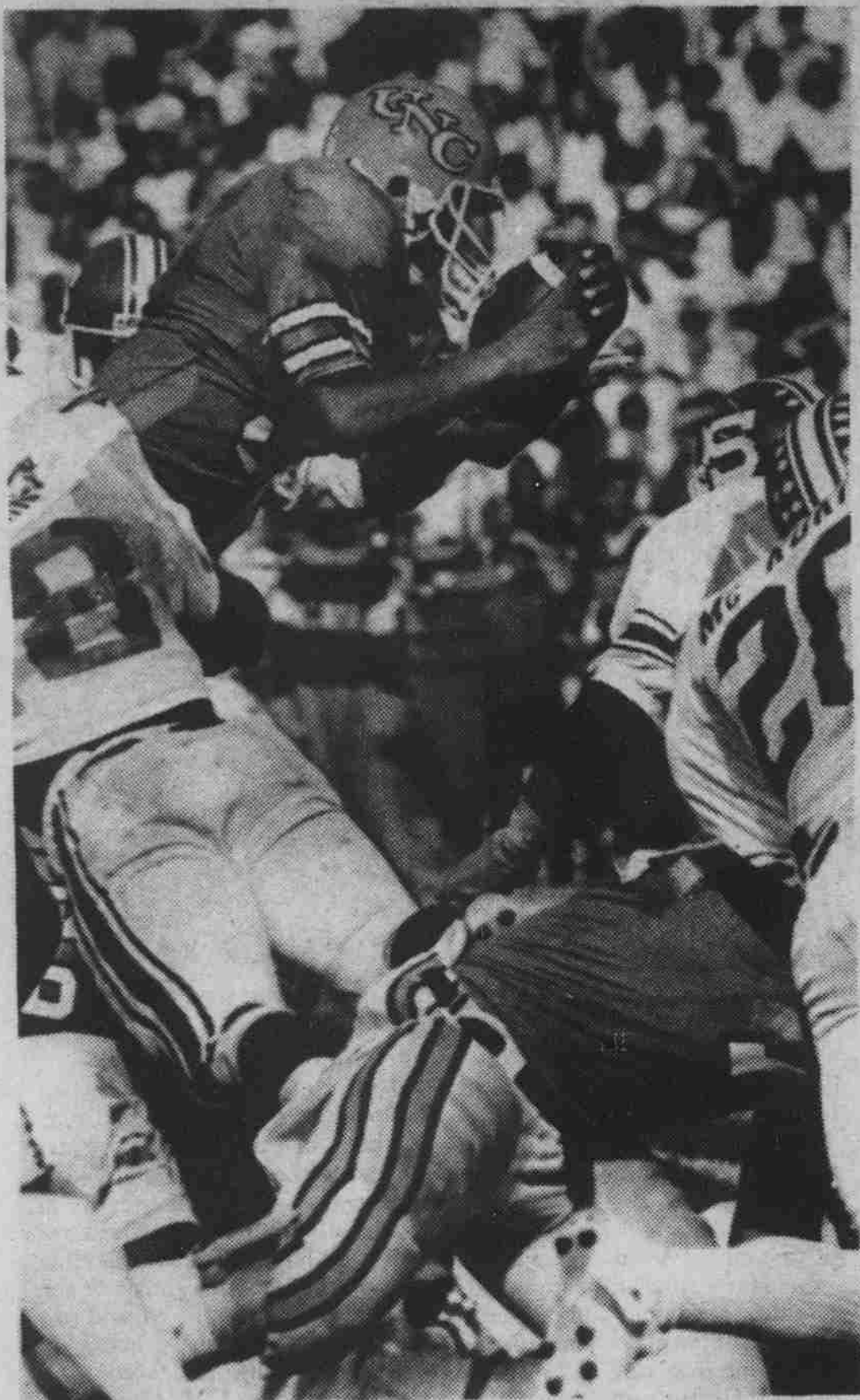


Humes sees ghosts of backfields past



By **TIM CROTHERS**
Assistant Sports Editor

At the close of Picture Day two weeks ago, North Carolina's junior tailback William Humes gazed out over the field at Kenan Stadium. The grass was littered with Coke cups, dropped and crushed by the snap-happy crowd. For Humes, these cups could have represented tacklers scattered by the ghosts of his predecessors Lawrence, Bryant and Horton.

Make no mistake, Humes is aware that he is filling a position which has developed into the trademark of the UNC football team. "I can't help but think of it sometimes," he said. To deal with the pressure that tradition has placed upon him, Humes adopts the same straightforward approach which is so characteristic of his running.

"One day, I would like to be in that long line of great tailbacks and I'm going to put forth 110% effort," he said, "but if it wasn't meant to be, then I'll be satisfied, I'll know I've done the best I could."

Two days earlier, at a press conference, UNC Coach Dick Crum had confirmed the worst-kept secret in Chapel Hill by announcing that North Carolina receivers would do more this season than play messengers between Crum and Kevin Anthony. While this is certainly the most exciting aerial news in North Carolina since Kitty Hawk, it appeared to be a message to Humes and the other UNC running backs to start practicing their pass blocking.

Crum has assured his backfield that the new offensive scheme will not neglect them. "If our passing game becomes what we want it to be," he said, "I think it will really enhance what our runners can do."

Crum's offensive backs coach, Bobby Cale, said the backs would keep busy catching passes. "It may

not be as many carries," he said, "but it will be more receptions." But Cale is not ruling out the possibility that one of the North Carolina tailbacks will continue "the tradition". "We want to have another 1,000-yard rusher and I think we can still do that," he said. "That position will entail a star."

Reenter William Humes. If there is to be a celebrity in the North Carolina backfield this season, the spotlight will most likely shine on Humes. UNC offensive coordinator Randy Walker said of Humes, "he can line up with anybody in the country." This is high praise for a man who only carried the ball 111 times at UNC before this season, but Humes may deserve it. He started last year's N.C. State game and rushed 27 times for 156 yards and three touchdowns. After the game, fans started to reminisce and dream, but Humes was sidelined for most of the late season with nagging injuries. If Humes has any chance to reach the elusive 1,000-yard plateau this season he must stay healthy.

Humes revealed his diversified role in the attack in the opener against Navy by accounting for 110 yards, 57 rushing on 18 carries and 53 pass receiving on seven catches.

North Carolina redshirt freshman Brad Sullivan seems to be stepping into the offense at the ideal time. Sullivan is a breakaway threat who ran a 6.28 in the 60-yard dash (second fastest in UNC history), while on the track team last year. He will split the tailback duties with Humes, utilizing his speed to wreak havoc as a runner or a receiver. "I'll try to give the team spark, try to break some big plays," Sullivan said.

Crum plans to take advantage of Sullivan's big play potential as soon as possible. "He needs playing time and experience, but he's going to be good," Crum said.

North Carolina fullbacks were among the first players to jump on Crum's bandwagon when he suggested opening up the offense. "Traditionally, the fullback's role has been blocking and three yards and a cloud of dust," starting fullback Brad Lopp said. "This year, I'll have the chance to get some big yards."

Indeed, Lopp and Norman Becton, UNC's fullback duo, are excited about the chance to catch the ball and run in the open field for a change. They will be more explosive as offensive threats and more convincing as decoys. "We don't want everybody to key on the tailbacks all the time," Lopp said.

The fullbacks are also expected to carry the ball more in the North Carolina Air Show. "We aren't going to forget about the running game," Becton said.

Lopp took full advantage of his rushing opportunities against Navy. He was the leading rusher, carrying 12 times for 72 yards, including a 22-yard touchdown run.

While the backs all have visions of touchdowns dancing in their heads, most of this team's goals are collective. Last season was a shock to a group of ballplayers used to winning and winning a lot. This year, there is something to prove. "I'd like to be ACC champs," Lopp said, "I'd like to have a ring."

Back on the deserted field at Kenan, Humes spoke of the ring. "It's our biggest goal," he said. But Humes is also chasing tradition. Standing in the end zone, he is watching Lawrence and Bryant and Horton. They have run for 1,000 yards in each of the last eight seasons.

William Humes wants to be a ghost, someday.

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William Humes scored three touchdowns and 20 points against N.C. State last year in a remarkable individual performance.

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