

Sports

Morris reformed, but a hero no more

By MIKE BERARDINO
Assistant Sports Editor

Standing near him, I couldn't help but feel the electricity. The air of urgency which pervaded his remarks was unlike any I had ever sensed before. He made me nervous.

Eugene "Mercury" Morris is an incredibly intense individual.

Just like every other normal young boy who grew up in the early 1970s in South Florida, my heroes were the men who wore the aqua-and-orange uniforms of the Miami Dolphins. Back-to-back Super Bowl championship seasons, including the enduring masterpiece 17-0 year in 1972, elevated Don Shula and his band of gritty gridsters to an unreachable plateau.

For me, the Dolphins were perfection personified.

Sadly, however, perfection on the playing field doesn't carry over into the "real" world. In fact, it doesn't mean a damn thing here.

Mercury Morris was a speedy, elusive, infinitely-talented running back who could seemingly switch on an invisible afterburner and turn the corner on the quickest of defenders. Number 22 was undeniably a vital cog in the Miami machine and the last truly great runner to regularly roam the Orange Bowl turf.

But in time, "Merc," the symbol of perfection, became Morris, the embodiment of the fallen hero. He became entangled in the always-alluring web a lady named "Cocaine" had spun for him. In 1982, he was busted for cocaine possession and trafficking.

Morris spent the next 42 months in a Dade County prison. That's a long time. Think about it.

While paling in comparison to the type of jail terms we mechanically throw around in casual conversation (5-10, 15-20, life) Morris' penance meant he had to experience almost 1,300 straight sunsets, had to fall asleep almost 1,300 straight nights, and wake up almost 1,300 straight mornings behind bars.

The tribulation made Morris, now 39, a changed man. He spoke about it last Thursday night at the Hotel Europa in Chapel Hill where he was the keynote speaker at the Cocaine Connection Conference. Later, Morris followed up his hour-long presentation by fielding questions from local and national media for another 30 minutes.

When he retired from professional football in 1976 after an eight-year career that ended with the San Diego Chargers, Morris realized just how one-dimensional his life had been for the first time since he began playing football 20 years earlier.

"When I stopped playing ball, I was left without a goal," he said. "For years, I always had someone who would hand me a game plan and say 'This is how we're going to do it.'

This is how we're going to win.' "When I retired, I found myself having to come up with my own plan. I sat around for seven years waiting for somebody to give me a game plan."

Getting busted roused Morris out of his self-imposed doldrums and eventually enabled him to become what he is today — a living, breathing drug-use deterrent.

Morris' inspiration? The word of Jesus Christ.

"I am for sure an unlikelihood second only to Paul (of Tarsus) as far as grace is concerned," Morris said. "Why He spared me, I have no idea."

While in captivity, Morris sought and found solace in the Bible. He also found the strength to overcome his dependence on cocaine.

"Drug use is a gigantic problem, but it can be defeated," he said. "While rehabilitation is fine, you can only be driven to that spot. You must want to go there yourself. You must desire a change."

His conversion apparently now complete, Morris tours the country, appears on talk shows and has taped a nationally-distributed public service announcement all with the same aim — spreading the word that God, not drugs, is where it's at.

Today, Morris lives in Miami with his wife and three children. Unlike the well-documented examples of Len Bias and Don Rogers, Morris got a second chance. You don't have to remind him of that.

Somewhere near the middle of his speech, Morris looked at his attentive audience and sort of blurted out, "Don't you feel bad for me, because I'm probably one of the happiest men on this earth today."

I don't feel bad for you anymore, Mercury. But as an ex-hero worshipper, I still feel bad for me.

Farmer, Chambers win for x-country

From staff reports

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — North Carolina's cross country teams opened up their 1986 seasons with easy victories at the Old Dominion Invitational. The top performances were put in by seniors Jim Farmer and Karol Chambers, who won the individual titles.

Farmer's time of 24:06 on the 4.5-mile course at Fort Story put him just ahead of teammates Mike McGowan (24:06) and Mike Currier (24:20), who finished in second and third places. The other performers for UNC were Reggie Harris (sixth in 24:37), Eric Landis (eighth in 24:48) and Mark Clinebell (ninth in 24:51). North Carolina's total of 20 points easily beat the second-place team, Old Dominion, which had 54 points.

Chambers' time of 20:30.6 on the 5,000-meter layout gave the Florida native her first collegiate cross country victory. The other Tar Heel scorers were Heather Zimmerman (fifth in 21:00), Kim Shuman (sixth in 21:26), Vicki Verinder (seventh in 21:37) and Jennifer Sallez (ninth in 22:04).

FSU football player killed

From Associated Press reports

Florida State University football player Pablo Lopez, a starting offensive lineman, was shot to death after an argument rekindled with a Tallahassee man outside a campus dance, police said.

Byron C. Johnson, 20, was

charged with first-degree murder in the shotgun slaying of the junior from Miami, Lt. Jack Handley of the university police said.

The Seminoles are scheduled to face UNC in Tallahassee next Saturday in a game nationally televised by WTBS.



DTH/Dan Charlson

Former football star Mercury Morris, once a drug user, spreads his anti-drug message around the nation

Clemson overpowers UNC soccer

By BONNIE BISHOP
Staff Writer

CLEMSON, S.C. — UNC lost its second game of the season to fourth-ranked Clemson, coming up on the short end of a 3-1 score here Sunday against the defending ACC champion.

The Tar Heels, who dropped to 4-2 overall and 0-1 in the ACC, came out hard in the first half and were the first to put points on the board 13 minutes into the game. Midfielder Marcus Martin took a pass from Tommy Nicholson and kicked it through the outstretched arms of Clemson's diving goalie for UNC's only goal of the game.

But the Tigers (3-0-1, 1-0), a perennial power in NCAA soccer, were simply too tough. They put UNC on the defensive for much of the rest of the game, outshooting the Tar Heels 19-7.

Clemson tied the score at 1-1 with a little more than three minutes left in the half, as the Tigers' Bill Fortner caught UNC by surprise with a goal off a pass from Eric Eichmann.

The Tar Heels were happy to be even at the end of one half on the road against a nationally-ranked squad. "I was pleased at the half with it knotted at 1-1," said UNC coach Anson Dorrance.

But hopes of a UNC upset were

quelled by Clemson, as the Tigers kept UNC on the defensive end of the field for the majority of the second half. North Carolina appeared to be run down and tired in the middle of the second half, and Clemson took advantage.

Keith Parkinson gave the Tigers the lead at 2-1 with an unassisted goal, and with five minutes left in the game Eichmann scored the final goal on an assist from John Meek.

After that goal made the score 3-1, UNC rebounded and defended its goal well. Goalie Darren Royer saved several more shots and prevented the score from reaching rout proportions.

Scoreboard

Football

UNC 20, Kansas 0
UNC 0 3 14 3-20
Kansas 0 0 0 0-0
UNC-FG Giamris 25
UNC-Humes 55 pass from Hall(Giamris kick)
UNC-Starr 2 run (Giamris kick)
UNC-FG Giamris 35
A-40,200

UNC	KU
First Downs 16	20
Rushes-yards 58-282	26-89
Passing yards 79	284
Return yards 49	36
Plays 5-15-0	29-50-2
Punts 9-39	7-36
Fumbles-lost 2-1	3-3
Penalties-yards 3-32	5-34
Time of possession 32:05	27:55

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
Rushing—UNC: Humes 22-89, Lopp 10-27, Thompson 7-37, Starr 11-71, Hall 5-21, Streeter 2-37, Kansas: Snell 16-87, Rogers 2-12, Vaughn 1-6, Henderson 1-(-4), Orth 6-(-20)

Passing—UNC: Hall 4-12-1-55, Mays 1-3-0-2, Kansas: Orth 29-50-2-299

Receiving—UNC: Humes 4-77, Starr 1-2, Kansas: Caldwell 7-98, Snell 7-47, Ray 4-57, Harvey 4-31, Vaughn 4-19, Harris 2-20, Rogers 1-19

Around the Nation in College Football

ACC

Furman 17, Georgia Tech 17
Georgia 31, Duke 3
Maryland 31, Vanderbilt 0
Navy 20, Virginia 10
N.C. State 14, Pittsburgh 14
Virginia Tech 20, Clemson 14
Wake Forest 31, Boston U. 0

Others

Miami 61, Texas Tech 11
Michigan 24, Notre Dame 23
TCU 48, Tulane 31
Mississippi St. 27, Tennessee 23
Iowa 43, Iowa St. 7
Kentucky 16, Rutgers 16
BYU 31, New Mexico 30
Army 33, Syracuse 28
USC 31, Illinois 16

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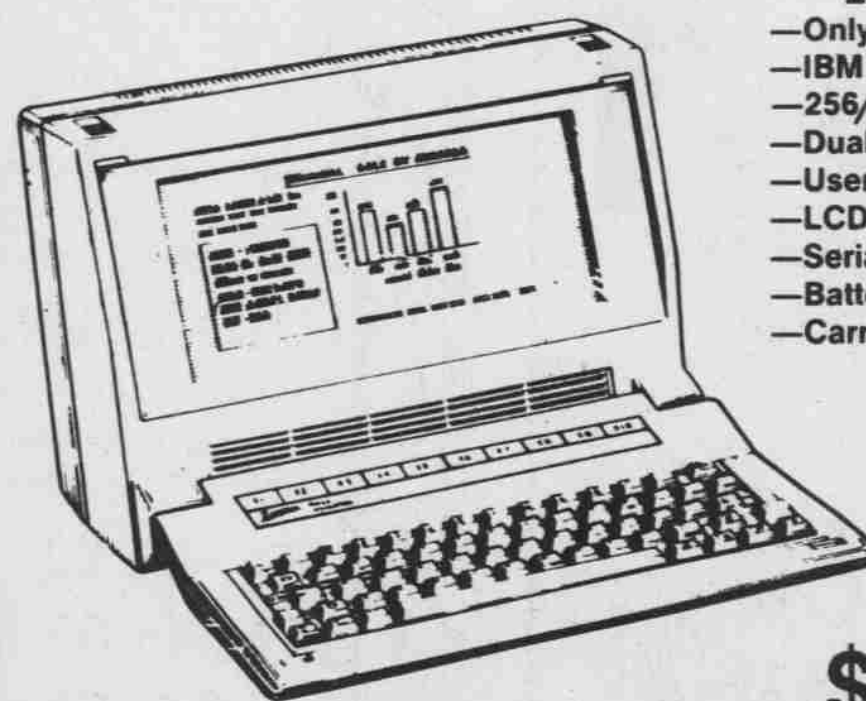
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