

SPORTS

Area Black schools produce quality grididders

By GREGORY CLAY
Sports Writer

Area Black colleges and universities in North Carolina have had a hand in producing some NFL talent the last few years.

Louis Breeden, formerly of North Carolina Central, is active with the Cincinnati Bengals. He missed his rookie season last year because of injuries. The 5-11, 180 pound defensive back may make a significant contribution to the Bengals' secondary this year because of the departure of All-Pros Lemar Parrish and Tommy Casanova. Breeden wears number 34 for the Bengals.

Jethro Pugh should be a household name to many football buffs by now. He has been in the NFL trenches for 14 years now. The 6-6, 250 pound defensive tackle from Elizabeth City State is still keeping up with Randy White, Harvey Martin and Co. at age 34. Mr. Pugh still wears old number 75 for the World Champion Dallas Cowboys.

John Walton, another Elizabeth City State alumnus, found a home in

Philadelphia this year. He is now backup quarterback to Ron Jaworski. Although he is 31 years old, Walton has been in the league only three years. The age and experience gap didn't seem to hinder Walton from having a good pre-season in '78 though. Still, number 11 will be one of the few Black quarterbacks in the league, starting or sitting.

George Ragsdale of North Carolina A&T is holding on with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He is listed as the third string wide receiver on the Bucs' depth chart. He did play in nine games last season as a running back and gained 21 yards on only three carries, although 15 of them came on one play. Ragsdale carries number 23 on his back for the Bucs.

Mel Phillips is another N.C. A&T graduate now with the San Francisco 49ers. The 36-year old defensive back may decide to play out his option with San Francisco. But before it's over the 12-year veteran might be better off calling it quits altogether. Phillips did pick off two passes for the 49ers last year, but that just ain't enough for the problem-oriented Bay area

team. If Phillips lasts through the rebuilding, he'll have to change his number 32 because "The Juice" is in town.

Maurice Spencer, still another defensive back, but from North Carolina Central missed the entire season last year with the New Orleans Saints due to a broken neck. He was a starter until that tragic happening. Spencer is expected back though, and his number is 29.

Charles Romes is also a defensive back and is also from N.C. Central. But he plays for the Buffalo Bills behind the great Tony Greene who was second in the league in interceptions last year. At least he has the honor of playing with another North Carolina product in the person of Dee Hardison from everybody knows where. If Romes gets on the field, number 26 will be his trademark.

Elvin Bethea, the 6-2, 255 pound defensive end is a stalwart in the Houston Oilers' 3-4 defense. The All-Pro lineman from N.C. A&T played in only nine games last year because of a broken arm. But number 65 is back and ready to harass opposing quarterbacks and runners for the 11th consecutive year.

Doug Wilderson is a landmark in the NFL after several years of rough going early in his career. The 6-22, 245 pound guard from N.C. Central started his career in Houston and flopped after making some All-America teams in college. He was traded to the San Diego Chargers and was hence rejuvenated. He is rated as one of the better guards in the league. This nine-year veteran wears number 63.

Darius Helton was last reported to have



San Diego's Doug Wilkerson, is a NCCU graduate. Photo reprinted from Street and Smith's Pro Football Handbook.

been on the Kansas City Chiefs' roster. Being a carbon copy of Wilkerson in position, size and alma mater, Helton may eventually come into his own. Number 62 is on his jersey, but that may change if he ends up switching teams.



Senior Ricky Borden heads Carolina's defensive backfield. Sports Information photo.

Barden leads UNC secondary

By KIM TURNER
Sports Writer

A while back, the Tarheel football team lost to Pittsburgh in what was an exciting afternoon of college football.

Ricky Antonio Barden, number 11, defensive back for Carolina felt that the team, "played real good against Pittsburgh. They just came up with the big plays at the end of the game," Barden said. Ricky said the biggest problem the team has is consistency and he feels that the team really needs to improve in this area.

Barden is a junior recreation major from Norfolk, Va. He attended Lake Taylor High School (along with Amos Lawrence), participating in track, football and basketball (his favorite). As a defensive back for Carolina, his job is to prevent the other team from catching passes, a position that he enjoys.

Looking back at the game against Maryland, Ricky said, "We didn't play well against Maryland because we made too many mental mistakes." On the other hand, he was satisfied with the way the Heels played (against Pittsburgh) except for "the way they moved the ball on us during their last possession."

"I think if we can continue to play like we played against Pittsburgh, then we can beat every team on our schedule," Ricky said.

Ricky's hobbies include backgammon, tennis and basketball. His plans after graduation are to be a recreation director.

"If I get a chance to play pro football, I will," he said. His favorite pro football team is the Pittsburgh Steelers.

And who's to say... one day he might be playing with them.

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