

Tennessee State now a football power

By GREGORY CLAY
Sports Writer

In the 1978 NFL draft Tennessee State University had the distinction of having no less than seven players picked no later than the sixth round.

That feat was better than the number of draftees from Oklahoma, Notre Dame, Texas, Ohio State, Michigan, USC, and a host of other big time college football traditions.

John Merritt is the head coach at this small predominantly Black school of nearly 5,000 students in Nashville, Tenn. He spurned job offers from major college and pro teams to continue his football factory operation because he felt it was a commitment.

Merritt's arch-rival in producing professional talent is Eddie Robinson, the head coach at Grambling. Out of 41 seasons at Grambling, Robinson has had 18 consecutive winning teams, thanks to stars such as James Harris and Gary "Big Hands" Johnson (both of the Chargers), Douglas Williams (Buccaneers), Willie Brown (Raiders), etc., etc.

Grambling, long a recognized hot bed for superior athletes has been losing out in the race to the pros as of the last few years.

Merritt groomed the recently retired defensive end Claude Humphrey (Falcons), Ed "Too Tall" Jones (defensive end, Cowboys) and Vernon Holland (offensive tackle, Bengals). They all have something else in common though—all three have made All-Pro in the NFL at some time.

Observers have often wondered about the competition these players face. Since becoming an Independent, Tennessee State will face Jackson State (who produced Walter Payton, Rich Caster, Robert Brazile, etc.), Florida, N.C. A&T, and of course Grambling during the course of '78.

The players Tennessee State sent to the NFL via the '78 draft will continue the prestige bestowed upon Merritt. Although he had no one picked in the first round this year, his record speaks for itself.

Last spring's draft saw Stan Johnson and Sylvester Hicks plucked by the Los



All-Pro Houston Oiler linebacker Robert Brazile was also groomed at a top black school (Jackson St.)

Angeles Rams and the Kansas City Chiefs, respectively, each in the second round.

Johnson is a 6-4, 275 pound defensive tackle who will most likely sit for a few years because of the abundance of quality defensive linemen with the Rams.

Hicks' story should be different. He is said to be a tough mean guy who can play either defensive tackle or end. At 6-4½, 248, he will probably be used where he's needed most, since the Chiefs lack good defensive linemen.

A few rounds later, in the fourth in fact, was just in time for Dwight Wheeler, Homer Elias, and Danny Johnson to be summoned by the New England Patriots, Detroit Lions, and the desperate Chiefs, respectively.

Wheeler is a 6-3, 275 pound offensive tackle who may step into the spotlight if All-Pro Leon Gray (Jackson State) walks out of camp again.

Elias, 6-3, 260, another of the many Tennessee State offensive linemen in the pros, may dislodge one of the Lion's starting guards before it's over.

Johnson is a smallish rookie linebacker by NFL standards for the Chiefs. Pro scouts say he needs a great deal of polish and is one of the fastest linebackers around. Although he is only 6-1, 216, Johnson may have a starting opportunity since incumbent Jim Lynch retired.

In the fifth round, the Kansas City Chiefs plucked again and caught Jerrold McRae. His position is wide receiver which makes his situation all the more interesting. The 6-1, 200 pound McRae will be battling Charlie Wade and Larry Dorsey who both happened to have played their college ball at Tennessee State.

The way the Chiefs are going, in the next ten years, all 45 players on their roster will be Tennessee State alumni.

Last but not least, there was the 6-1, 190 pound Rodney Parker just waiting to be discovered by the Atlanta Falcons. He is another wide receiver and will be battling Wallace Francis (Arkansas AM&N) and Alfred Jenkins (Morris Brown) for a starting role.

Merritt has nearly 20 players in the pro ranks excluding this year's rookies.

Although UNC is known more for producing basketball talent, and Tennessee State is not, that figure represents two and one-half times as many ex-Tar Heel players that are in the professional ranks, comparatively speaking.

So what should Coach Merritt do for an encore in next year's draft?

Send two players in each of the first six rounds.

Maybe so.

It doesn't sound too far-fetched for Tennessee State and of course, John Merritt.



Coach Cleve Bryant

Bryant on grid staff

By KIM TURNER
Sports Writer

Cleve Bryant is doing exactly what he loves best in the world, coaching football.

The former star quarterback for Ohio University came to Chapel Hill along with Dick Crum last year and is now an assistant coach for Carolina, coaching the quarterbacks.

Bryant, who hails from Canton, Ohio, graduated from Ohio University in 1970. He was drafted by the Denver Broncos but didn't make the final cut. He worked on Dick Crum's Miami staff one year before coming to Carolina.

While Bryant was at Ohio, he led the Bobcats to back-to-back Mid-American Conference championships in 1967 and 1968. He was also MAC Offensive Player-of-the-Year in 1968 and he is a member of the Ohio U. Athletic Hall of Fame.

Carolina couldn't have gotten a better man to coach its quarterbacks. Bryant said that both the Carolina quarterbacks were gifted, but that they had two different styles.

"Chuck Sharpe, as a freshman has played excellent, but of course, he has made mistakes because of inexperience," he said.

Matt Kupec, who will be started against Clemson, "has made a lot of improvements and is doing an excellent job as quarterback," said Bryant.

Baseballers to Hawaii

North Carolina's baseball team, third-place finishers in the 1978 College World Series, will play six games in Honolulu next spring as part of a 55-game schedule.

The Tar Heels will play the University of Hawaii six times during the week of March 6-13. The Rainbows, who led the nation in team earned run average this year, feature All-America pitcher Derek Tatsuno who topped the country in total strikeouts.

"We're looking forward to a great trip and a tough series with Hawaii," said Carolina coach Mike Roberts. "We are hoping this trip will be the first of several for us to Honolulu."

In his first year at the helm, Roberts took the Tar Heels to the College World Series in Omaha and guided them to a 38-17 record. Several starters, including All-American pitcher Greg Norris, are slated to return next season.

Freshman Lauren Lewis on UNC female track squad

By Karen Smith
Sports Writer

She has blonde hair, big eyes and a bright smile. And she is the newest edition to the University of North Carolina track team.

In case you are wondering who this new track star is, she is Lauren Leslie Lewis from Montclair, New Jersey. She is also the only Black freshman on the team holding a scholarship. When asked how much her scholarship was worth, Lauren replied, "I'm not sure. Um, around \$4,000 a year".

While at home in Montclair, New Jersey, Lauren won first place respectively in the hurdles, discus and long jump in the Essex County Meet. She also was a member of her school's 440 yard and 880 yard relay teams who were selected Best in the State of New Jersey.

Since being at Carolina, Lauren has participated in the Penthalon, an event where track team members compete against each other. Lauren placed first in the hurdles, second in the long jump, third in the quarter mile run and fourth in the discus.

When asked about the upcoming track season, Lauren said that the season opens in January with the first meet against Richmond.

"We're looking forward to a good season", Lauren said with a bright smile, then she left to join the other members of the track team for practice.

New coaches

Willie Scroggs, a former assistant lacrosse coach at John Hopkins, and Tommy Dixon, a former standout tennis player for the Tar Heels, are the latest additions to the North Carolina coaching ranks.

Scroggs will serve as head lacrosse coach at Carolina in addition to his duties as assistant business manager. Dixon, who won six Atlantic Coast conference flight championships in his playing days, will aid head Tar Heel tennis coach Don Skakle as an assistant.

Prior to his appointment at Carolina, Scroggs, 31, had served for five years as an assistant coach in charge of defense and goalkeeping at Hopkins, his alma mater. During the last three years, the noted lacrosse institution finished third in the nation in 1976, second in 1977, and first in 1978, beating Cornell in the NCAA championship game. He was also an assistant football coach during his stint at Hopkins.

During his undergraduate days at Hopkins, Scroggs was a regular midfielder on the Blue Jays' three national championship teams (1967-69). The Blatimore Md., native won six varsity letters, three in lacrosse and three in football. He captained the gridiron squad his senior year.

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