

Sports

Elon's Mike Ollari-what a character

By Jeff Marcini
Sports Editor

A character.

That's the best way to describe Elon fullback Mike Ollari.

The term fits the junior from Orange, Mass., both on and off the football field.

For starters, he has been known to eat worms. He also has consumed flies and roaches at pregame meals.

Then there was the snake incident.

"One time at practice, we found a snake, and at the time we had a guy who played center who really hated them," Ollari recalled. "So we decided to put it on the ground alongside the ball. When he saw that snake, he jumped a foot off the ground."

If that seems like a typical football player's prank, there is more to the story.

"They (coaches) told me to get rid of it, so I threw it, and everything went but about four inches of the tail," he said, laughing. "So I took the tail and hung it from the front of my face mask, and it dangled there for the

rest of practice."

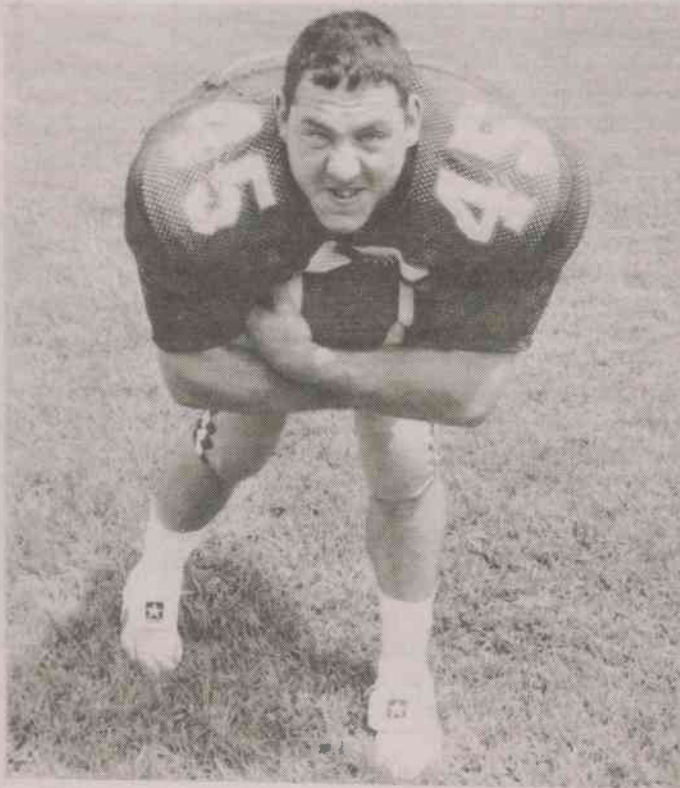
Ollari's coach, Macky Carden says that the 6-foot, 220-pound fullback "really keeps you loose, and he always has something going on."

He's also a pretty good football player. Used primarily as a blocker in Elon's tailback-oriented offense, Ollari nevertheless managed to gain 459 yards on 85 rushing attempts last year, his first as a starter.

Ollari, who recently changed the spelling of his surname from "O'Lari," said he has played sports all his life while growing up in an athletic family.

"We didn't have a little league program when I grew up, so I first started playing football in junior high," he remarked. He also played basketball and baseball and was on the gymnastics team at Mahar High School.

Ollari said he enjoys all aspects of football. Hitting, he says, "hurts like hell, but it's fun, especially when you ring a few bells." He likes blocking "as long as we keep winning." As a ballcarrier, he said he likes running to run over people rather than



TOUGH CUSTOMER: Elon fullback Mike Ollari says he likes to "run over people, not around them."

around them."

On game days, how does Ollari

Photo by Michele Lashley

get ready to play?

"I go through each play in my head before I go out on the field, I don't go out and beat my head up against a Coke machine," he said.

But "a good hit the first chance I get" makes him physically ready, he added.

"Mike is a tough football

player," Carden agreed. "He really loves the game."

Ollari most admires former NFL running backs Larry Csonka and Rocky Bleier. "Csonka is his style of play, and Bleier for his determination."

"People tell me I run like Czonka or a John Riggins, but I don't try and model my play after theirs," he added.

There is a special moment in every player's career, and Ollari came when he was in prep school.

"I had had ligaments removed from my knee, and they told me I would not play any more this season," he recalled. "But I did, and on my first play back, I gained 14 yards on a sweep." The Ollari said, is his most memorable moment.

Ollari said this year's Elon team, currently 4-0, is capable of achieving the goal it set at the preseason: to win a national championship. He also set some individual goals, including a 1,000-yard rushing year and a tailback Dwayne Clark.

"If Dwayne gets 1,000 yards, it will mean that the offensive line and I are doing our jobs," he said.



Christians return to action, host SAC-8 foe Presbyterian

By Jeff Marcini
Sports Editor

The undefeated Fightin' Christians football team gets back into action Saturday after having an open date last week. They host the always defensively-tough Presbyterian Blue Hose in a key SAC-8 game at 2 p.m. in Burlington Memorial Stadium.

Five new members will be inducted into the Elon Sports Hall of Fame in ceremonies on Saturday morning.

"The open date gave us a chance to heal our injuries," coach Macky Carden said. "I hope we come out like a ball of fire on Saturday."

Among the banged-up Elon players are defensive tackle Chris Castor and tailback George Dixon, both of whom are expected to play on Saturday.

Last year the Blue Hose upset the Christians 12-9, holding Elon's star tailback Jonas Davis to only 39 yards. PC preserved the victory by intercepting a pass late in the game in the end zone. The loss was the first for Elon en route to a 7-3 record last season.

"Last year the PC game was our poorest performance of the season," Carden said. "We were flat and just let it slip away."

The Blue Hose will bring a 4-1 record into the

contest, but more importantly a 2-0 record in the SAC-8. They are coming off a 12-0 victory over Catawba last Saturday.

The PC offense is led by tailbacks Stevie Riggins, the Rookie of the Year in the SAC-8 last season, and Jimmy Lindsey.

"Lindsey is the strong, hard runner, and Riggins is the speedy, big-play type of back," Carden noted.

Riggins rushed for more than 900 yards last year, led the league in punt returns with 312 yards and returned two punts for touchdowns.

Presbyterian will bring into the game a strong defense that led the league in total defense and rushing defense in 1985. It is led by All-SAC 8 free safety Kevin Calwile, who intercepted six passes last year, and strong safety Stacey Drakeford.

All the linebackers and cornerbacks who started in 1985 return to stabilize the Blue Hose defense.

"Calwile is an outstanding player, and with Drakeford is in on about every play," Carden said.

Carden, who with his staff attended the PC-Catawba game, said that the Blue Hose seem really ready for Elon.

"It is a big game," Carden added, "and we will have to run the ball well and neutralize their two safeties to win."

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