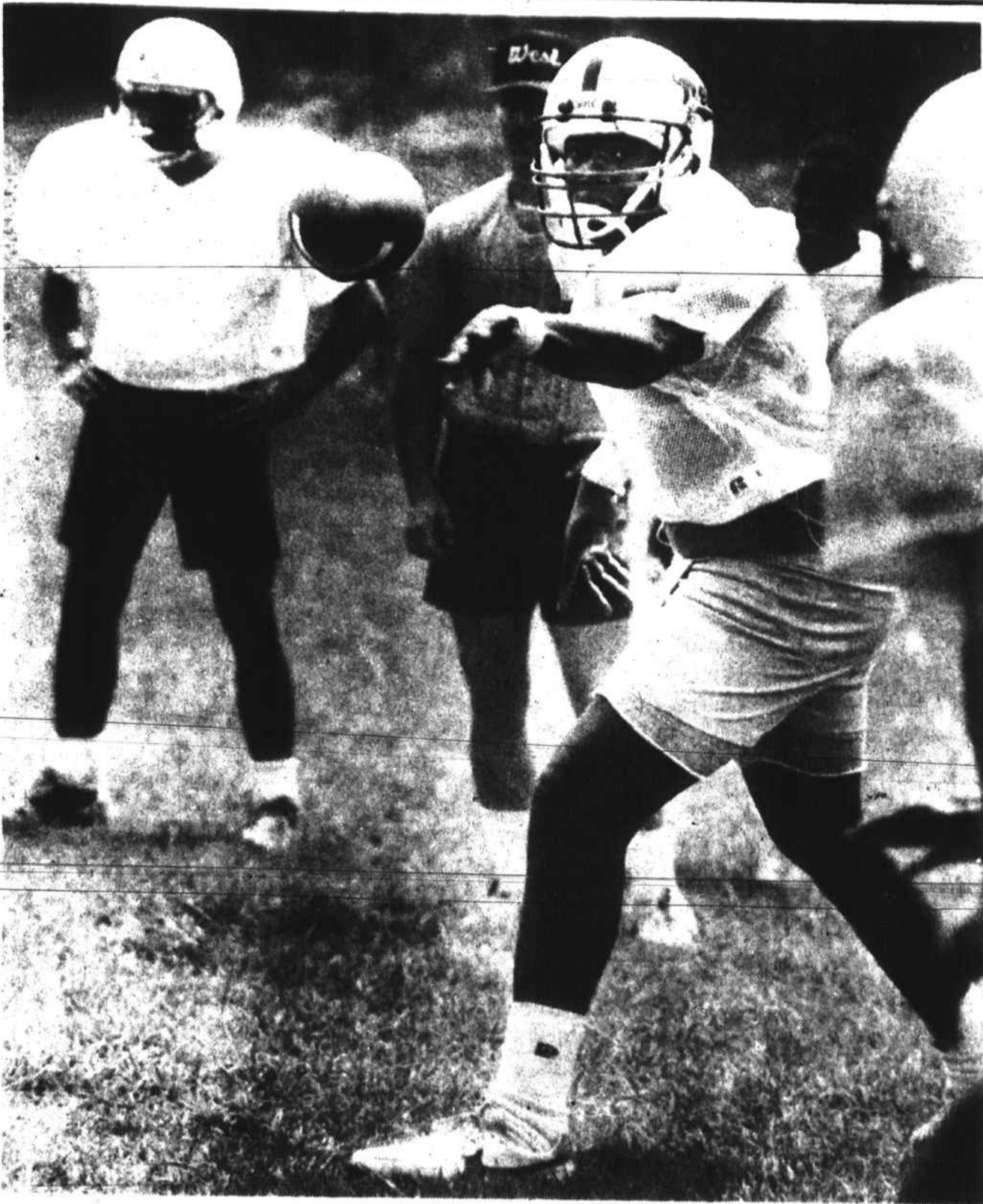


Sports



With returning senior quarterback Derrick Byers, West Forsyth could very well be in the thick of things for a CPC title. The Titans hope to overcome the loss of 34 seniors and stage a return to the playoffs in 1987 (photo by James Parker).

Prep Football Preview

Stubborn Titans hope to ride Byers' arm to a conference title

By RANDY PETTITT
Chronicle Sports Editor

West Forsyth lost 34 seniors, including All-State running back Herman McKinnie, and returns only an averaged size team. But don't let Head Coach Denny Zeiters lull you into thinking the Titans can be written off.

With returning quarterback Derrick Byers, wide receiver Butch Blackwell, and tackles Craig Bethel and Wesley Moore, West Forsyth probably won't match their 10-1-1 record last season, but they should be pretty decent according to Zeiters.

"You can't just go out and find another Herman McKinnie, but I do think we'll have a pretty good football team despite losing a lot of kids from last year," said Zeiters, who has performed a minor miracle, transforming the Titans from county doormats to the ones tracking in the mud.

"Derrick can throw the ball as well as anyone around here, and I think we'll be relying on the pass a little more than last season," he said. "But we'll have a couple of guys who can run the football too."

Zeiters says linebackers Donald Carter and Greg Ruminski will run the ball some at fullback, while Danny Vestal and Wendell Blackwell figure in the tailback plans for the Titans.

Vestal subbed for an injured McKinnie during a game against Mount Tabor last season, providing 112 key yards in a

win over the Spartans.

"Danny can run the football. I think Ruminski and Carter are two hard-nosed kids who'll get us some yards at fullback as well," said Zeiters.

"We'll mix it up probably more than everyone expects us to."

He said it will take a little more time to get the timing down on pass patterns, but that he is happy with the progress so far.

"Anytime you've got a guy like Derrick Byers throwing the football, you feel a little better. He has a lot of experience back there. That is very valuable having an experienced QB."

Jay Stewart, Mark Phelps, John Crawford and Darrin Smith appear to be on the verge of starting offensive jobs at this point. Several junior-varsity players are in the running also.

Kak Proctor will handle most of the kicking duties. Zeiters said he's ran out of the specialty punters and that Byers or Carter may kick off or punt.

Defensively, the Titans return outstanding senior linebackers Donald Carter and Gerg Ruminski, defensive tackle Jeff Patton and defensive back Mike Moore. Sophomore Mark Payne looks impressive at tackle, as does Mark Champagne at noseguard.

Greg McCollum looks like a starting end, while Todd Haglan, Mike Manning, Roosevelt Williams and Corey

Hart look good in the secondary for the Titans. Zeiters singled out Williams, who played some last year, intercepting a pass for a touchdown against Mount Tabor. Williams is one of the fastest players on the team, clocking a 4.6 in the 40-yard dash.

Zeiters says the slowest time in the secondary might be a 4.7, which indicates good speed. He says the linebackers and ends should be quick as well.

"We'll be pretty fast across the board, but not all that huge in most areas," he said. "I think the defense will come together pretty fast and hold us in the early ball-games. That's why we were so successful last year -- our defense."

Indeed, the Titans allowed just 84 points in 12 games last year, averaging only seven per game. Davie County and Mount Tabor were the only team to score two touchdowns on West last year. The Titans had four shutouts.

"Dave McConnell, our defensive coordinator, has done a hell of a job for us the past two years. He deserves a lot of the credit. He works as much or more than I do," Zeiters said.

Zeiters said he thought Kannapolis, Reynolds, Davie County, South Rowan and his club will be in the hunt for the three playoff spots in the Central Piedmont Conference.

"If we don't get behind too much early on, then I think we have a good shot at playing an extra game or two," he said.

County coaches pick Reynolds as the team to beat in the CPC

By RANDY PETTITT
Chronicle Sports Editor

With seven returning starters on both offense and defense, Reynolds is being tabbed as the best team in the county. But Head Coach Doug Crater just wants to be the best in the Central Piedmont Conference.

"We are definitely looking forward to this season," said Crater, who remembers the good old days like the time Reynolds upset Greensboro Page and tore down the goal post after the game.

"I think this team has some real potential if we work at it. I'd say we have a definite shot at making the playoffs. We just missed it by a hook and a crook last year (by the flip of a coin), and we have the

"I hope this will finally be our year. We have a lot of kids coming back and it should be interesting."

- Doug Crater

majority of those kids back plus some talented players up from the junior varsity program.

"I'm excited and so are the kids."

Offensively, the buck stops at junior fullback Dred Booe, who is 6-2 and 245 pounds. Crater expects a good year from the Demon's big man.

"We hope Dred can carry a lot of the load for us offensively," said Crater. "We won't run on every down by no means, but it will be a big part of our game."

Senior tailback Dedrick Glover will join Booe in the backfield at tailback, where senior quarterback John Barnes will give the Demons plenty of experience in the backfield.

Barnes will have seniors Kelly Fladger, Kevin Mitchell and Greg Egloff to throw to along with a couple of junior varsity prospects.

The offensive line will be anchored by a pair of 285-pound seniors in Lovaner Price and

Charles Irvin. Most county teams don't have one, much less two players over 275 pounds. The Demons also have starting senior Tim Thompson, 5-10, 230 pounds, senior Gordon Scott and senior Eric Dirr at 5-11 and 190 pounds. Six junior varsity players are also in the hunt for finding playing time on the offensively line as well.

On defense, the Demons look equally imposing with seven returning starters.

Standouts include senior Denard Atkins, who average nearly 14 tackles a game at linebacker last year, and free safety Kenneth Tsuruta.

They are joined by Anthony Coles at defensive end, Price, Irvin, Thompson, Nick Warren and sever-

al of the offensive lineman competing for playing time on the defensive front.

Defensive backs include Chris Fulk, Fladger and help from the jayvee team.

Crater says he may have to ask a few players to go both ways, but is trying to avoid it if he can.

"We like to try to give everyone one primary position and stick to it," he said. "They learn their position inside out and don't get as tired as kids going both ways."

Crater says Barnes will share the kicking duties with Booe at this point, and that the special teams look much intact from those used last season.

He says a key to the Demons' success will be how quickly they learn to move the ball on offense.

"We've been slow in moving the ball the last couple of year," said Crater. "I hope we don't have to wait until the middle of the sea-

son before we start moving the ball well. That hurt early in the year last year, but once we got it going, things were fine."

Indeed, the Demons lost four straight to open the season, but won five of their last six, narrowly missing the playoffs by a flip of the coin.

"We hope to avoid flipping a coin to decide our fate this year. We want to win enough games where we won't have to worry about tossing a coin."

"A lot of people are picking on us, but I think Davie County will be tough to stop. They are bigger and taller than we are and have a lot of people back. They make us look like babies."

"Then I'd say Kannapolis has the next best chance to take it. The third spot is a tossup between the rest of us. It ought to be interesting."

The Demons finished 5-5 last season, taking wins over Mount Tabor, Davie County, North Davidson, Parkland and North Forsyth.

They are indeed challengers for the CPC throne this year.

On the Sidelines

Two city teams should duke it out in the CPC

By RANDY PETTITT
Chronicle Sports Editor

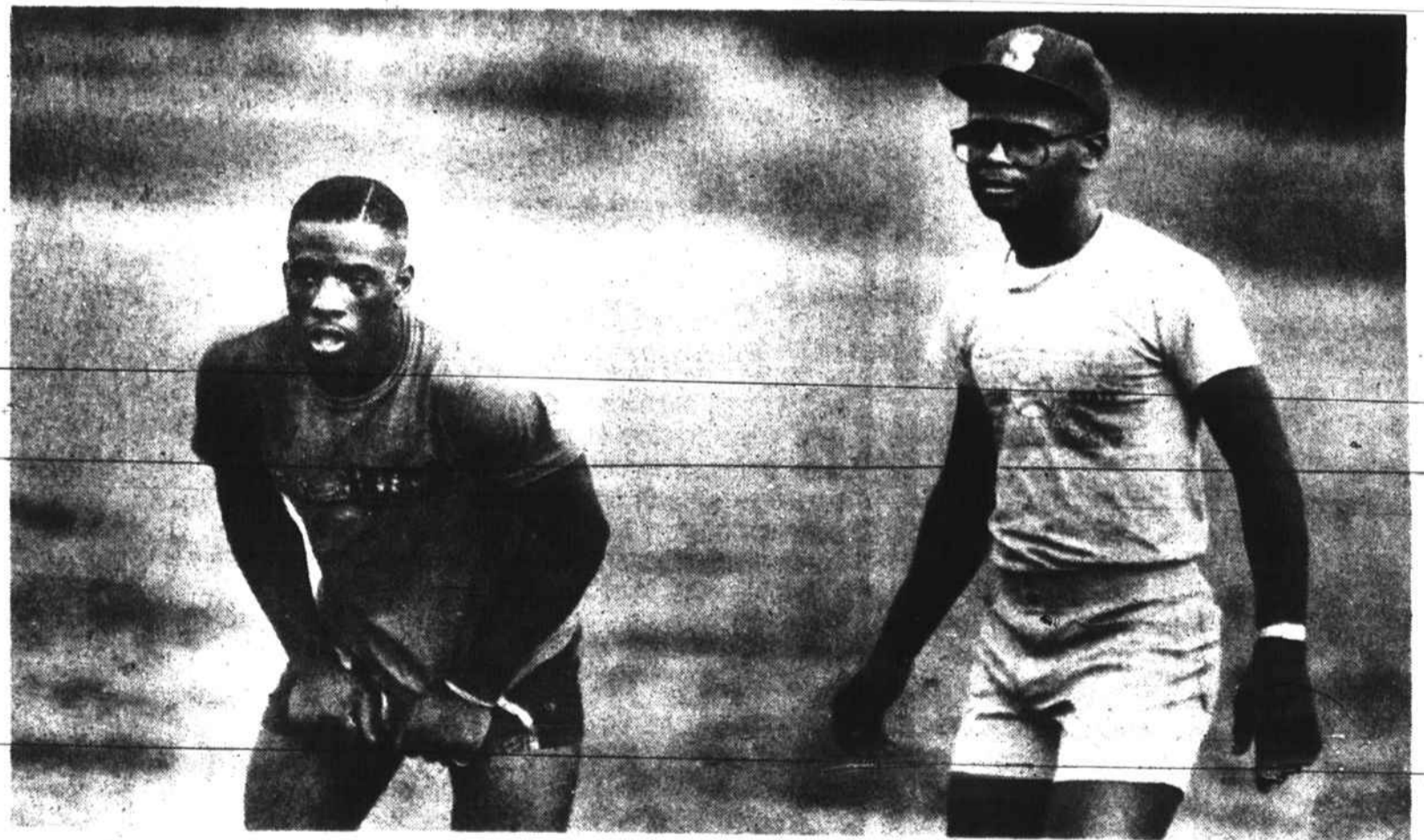
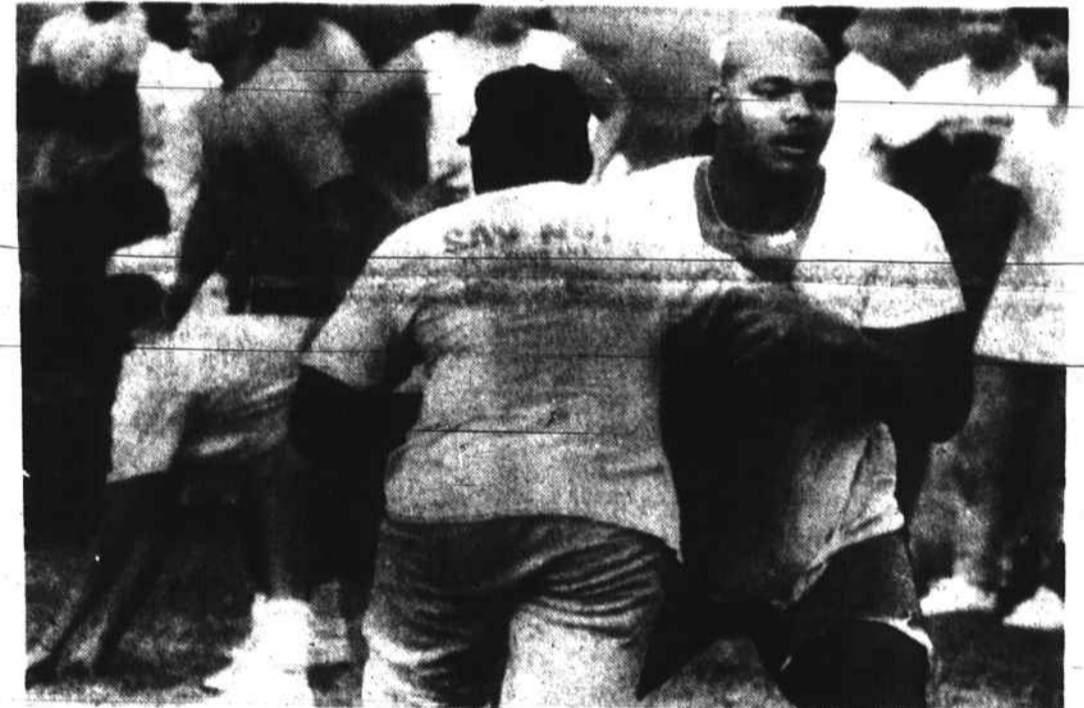
Although I've never been sent to the guillotine, I think I know how the guy must've felt -- as I hereby stick my neck out and predict what is likely to happen in Central Piedmont Conference football this fall.

Predicting high school athletics is about like trying to predict the weather. You may tell if it's going to rain, but not exactly where and how much.

On paper, one high school team might appear to have enough

Working Out!

Lovaner "Loppie" Price, (right), blocks a teammate in practice. At 6-4, 285 pounds, the senior is one of the reasons Reynolds will strong up front this year. Derrick Glover, (bottom), receives some instructions in a workout drill. Glover, a senior running back, is expected to help the Demons get their offense rolling early this season (photos by James Parker).



weapons to beat the Pittsburgh Steelers, but on the field, they might not be able to beat the Tiny Greyhound Junior Pee Wees.

That air of uncertainty is the attraction to high school sports. The fumbles at the goal line with second left in the fourth quarter, the busted plays, the wide-open dropped passes and the sheer desire to beat your arch rival no matter what.

These ingredients are to find on any other playing field at the collegiate or professional levels. College and pro sports are big busi-

ness these days, but high school athletes still believe in wallowing in the mud and getting down to business. The unexpected is still there.

The only sure thing in high school sports is that one of the dancing boots will miss a step during the halftime show, the band will have a fat bass drum player and the cheerleaders will stand with their hands on their hips during the last 38 seconds of the fourth quarter.

With that in mind, I hereby attempt to pick the varsity football contenders and the pretenders of the Central Piedmont Conference.

Mighty Wonders

Football players don't grow on trees in Kannapolis, but good coaching staffs certainly seem to. The Incredible Wonders of A.L. Brown High School in Kannapolis seem to have an unexhaustable supply of coaching and community support.

Former 3-A state champions before they joined the CPC, Kannapolis is always well coached and