

# James Webster Jr. hired as Wake football assistant From Page B1

ment for quarterback coach Jeff Blower, who went to Southern Mississippi. Dooley has not completely filled his staff, so assistant coaching duties are still up in the air.

Webster will probably coach the Deacons' linebackers next season and will be in charge of recruiting high school talent from the Piedmont area. He says his hiring should further strengthen Dooley's commitment to reaping in-state talent.

"Coach Dooley has a history of signing good in-state kids," said Webster. "When he was at Carolina, much of the talent off his great teams came from right here. If a North Carolina kid has good grades and is a good athlete, then hopefully we'll be looking at him."

Webster has already started the recruiting trail and says Wake is looking at several areas prospects.

"We can't call many names yet," he said. "A lot of kids just haven't made up their minds."

The former winner of the Brian Piccolo Award for displaying athletic courage in the Atlantic Coast Conference, says he has special ties with Winston-Salem and is glad to be home.

"This is home for me," said Webster. "I grew up here and it was the influence of a lot of people in this town that made me what I am today."

Webster said former coaches Ben Warren, George Greene and Ron Hollingsworth were among the many who molded him into a successful athlete and student.

"All of them were disciplinarians," he said. "They all believed in hard work and all of them had boards. If you messed up, you got the board."

"The many things my parents and coaches taught me ago still with me."

Webster, who was among Bill Dooley's first full recruiting class at UNC, was also among the first few black athletes in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"It was very significant," said Webster. "For the first time, blacks were getting involved in athletics in the ACC. It was time for a change."

"It sort of paved the way for individuals to be looked upon for their academic and athletic achievements -- not just whether they were black or white."

Webster, a former assistant with the University of Kansas, the University of Colorado and Northwestern University, was a football standout at Atkins High School in the mid-60s.

He elected to finish his high school career under Coach Homer Thompson at Parkland.

"It wasn't because I was dissatisfied with my coaches or the team," he said. "There were some conflicts outside of school and that prompted the decision."

Webster was among the first black athletes at Parkland and says the move was a hard one to make.

"It was a delicate and tough time to go from Atkins to Parkland," said Webster. "But Coach Thompson was a real big help in helping things work out. He never intimidated me or pressured me. It was my decision and I thought it was best for me at the time."

Webster starred as a linebacker for the Camels and Mustangs and was signed by Dooley to attend Carolina. He was the first black athlete out of Winston-Salem to play football for an ACC school.

After three successful seasons for the Tarheels, tragedy struck.

During a practice before his junior season, Webster was working on punt return drills with incoming freshmen. Trying to avoid hitting a teammate in the knees at full speed, he lifted his head and took full impact of the collision in the back of his head. It broke his neck and he missed eight games.

For his remarkable recovery, he was awarded the Brian Piccolo Award for displaying courage in

the Atlantic Coast Conference.

He credits *Winston-Salem Journal* sportswriter Mary Garber for helping him through an injury-plagued career.

"Mary was always writing

something about me," he recalled of Garber.

"She followed me all the way through and was an inspiration. When I was elected to the High School Hall of Fame last year, she

was one of the people I forgot to thank."

His father was a standout at Atkins High School and at Winston-Salem State.

Webster says he hopes to make

Winston-Salem home for good.

"My family and I have done a lot of traveling and this is where we want to make our home. This is my chance to let my former teachers, coaches and friends to see the

results of their hard work.

"I appreciate all the help and guidance I received when I was in school. This is my way of saying -- thanks."

"There's no place like home."



James Webster

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