

Benedict opens spring drills

Continued From 8B

crowds - 40,000 to 50,000 people at each game."

Benedict athletic director Willie Washington headed the effort that finally put together a five-year plan for football. On May 31, 1995, the official announcement was made that football was returning to Benedict, but the school wasn't going to wait a year to kickoff.

Harold Jackson, a standout

wide receiver at Jackson State and in the NFL, was named as head coach in June. He brought along with him two other former NFL players, Julius Adams and Robert Weathers, as defensive and offensive coordinators.

NFL names meant positive publicity for the reborn program but it had a few problems along the way.

"A lot of folks said you've got to be crazy to take on a task

like that in a short period of time. We had to order equipment, get the coaching staff and all that stuff together," Jackson recalled.

Spring practice ends on April 27 with the Purple and Gold game at Bolden Stadium. Whatever value of holding drills some five months before the season starts at Johnson C. Smith, one thing is certain - football is really back at Benedict.

Johnson wins at homecoming

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Georgia, Johnson was near perfect from the field, hitting 7 of 10 shots for 16 points. She also hauled down five rebounds, part of Tennessee's 54-39 advantage over the smaller Lady Bulldogs. Every time Johnson scored, her orange-clad personal cheering section stood and shouted.

"I told the team, 'hey, this is my home. What's my home is your home,'" she said. "We had the home court advantage."

Johnson parlayed that home court advantage into selection on the all-tournament team, along with teammates Michelle Marciniak, the Final Four MVP and freshman Chamique Holdsclaw. Georgia's La'Keshia Frett and

Saudia Roundtree, the national player of the year and Anderson, S.C. native, also made the team. Johnson said the Vols' defense on Roundtree was the key to winning.

"The difference in the game I think, we took Saudia out of the game early, she started looking for other players, versus coming down and taking a shot herself and being that go to player, like she normally does," Johnson said.

This was an unexpected championship for the 32-4 Lady Vols. Coach Pat Summitt cautioned the team before the season they would have to overachieve to do it. They did, which makes the title even tastier.

"Unless you've been in that

position and coached and played in a national championship game when everyone expected you to win, you expected to win and compare it to today, you just can't appreciate how much more fun this was," Summitt said. "This was a lot of fun."

Next year, the Final Four moves to Cincinnati and the Lady Vols could be back again. That means a roadtrip for the Johnson clan. That wouldn't be a problem.

"I don't let my friends and family get to me," she said. "I just stay mentally focused. I couldn't let them distract me. They knew that I came here to do one thing and that was to win a national championship." Now she has it.

Huntley checks out the draft

Continued From 8B

amazing how this thing has taken off."

Huntley says he's tried to keep a low profile. There is a premium on time these days.

"I have to find time for everything," he says. "I have a daughter (Affron) that I love and care about. I have to make time for her. Then I have a fiance who I have to make time to spend with her."

Other priorities in his life are staying on top of his studies at WSSU and working out.

"I'm taking 12 hours right now and that will leave me nine hours short of graduating," he says. "That degree is something that I definitely want. That's something that my mother has always stressed and I want to get it for her."

Whenever he gets away from everything else, Huntley works out. He is on a program that has helped him get his 40 yard time down and also increased his strength and weight.

Huntley was invited to the NFL combine in Indianapolis, but he didn't work out. He said he hadn't gotten over two nagging injuries at that time and didn't want to hurt his chances.

"Coming from a small school, the pros are already hesitant to draft you," he says. "They look for anything to keep them from giving you a high rating."

So Huntley sat back in hotel room, worked on his academic work and sorted through other things that were going on in his life. He has picked an agent, Los Angeles-based Robert Caron, and is trying to rely on his advice for the draft.

Although some observers thought that by not working out Huntley would hurt his chances in the draft, it turned out to be a real plus for him. He had some 45 scouts come to Winston-Salem for his personal workout on March 17. What they saw pushed Huntley's stock up tremendously.

They were particularly impressed with his agility, jumping ability and speed. He also tipped the scale at 221, heavier than his playing weight in '95. His first timing in the 40-yard dash, 4.42, really got scouts' attention.

"They really had no idea that I had that kind of speed," Huntley said. "Some of them even thought that they had gotten a bad reading on my time."

So Huntley was asked to run again. This time he turned in a 4.43. Since then, Huntley has moved up considerably in pre-draft analysis.

"The word that I'm getting is that Richard has moved up into the early second round and possibly into the first round," Manns says.

Huntley says between his

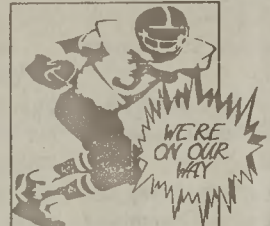
agent and the scouts, he thinks he'll figure into the plans of a lot of NFL teams.

"They say that I've changed some people's minds about the draft."

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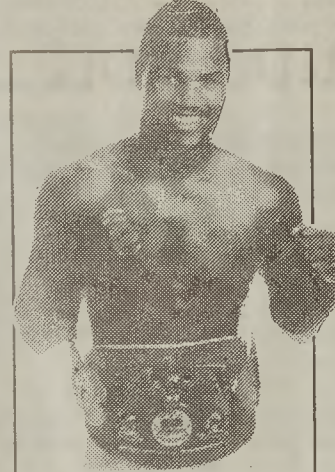


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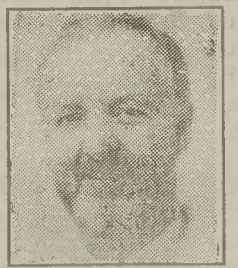
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