

Front Seven Strong, Quick

Led by Marcus Jones and A Leaner Greg Black, UNC Has Speed Up Front on 'D'

JAMES D. WHITFIELD
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

At first glance, North Carolina's defensive front looks young, inexperienced and very questionable.

UNC lists linebacker Kerry Mock as the

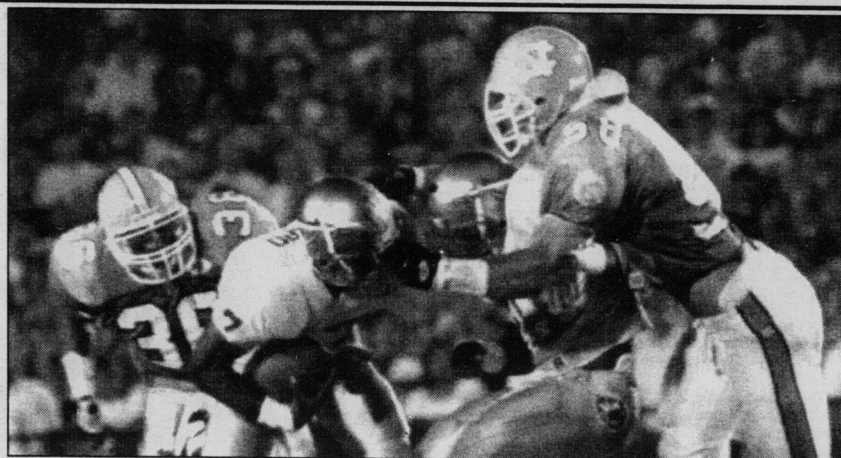
only returning starter out of the unit.

Of course, that's only a list. But that list doesn't mention Outland Trophy-candidate Marcus Jones, Mike Morton and a 50-pound-lighter Greg Black.

All of a sudden, that young defensive front becomes a talented, grizzled and veteran unit that stands in line to take command of the UNC defense this season.

With this unit, UNC just might have hit a very important point — the point of reloading instead of rebuilding.

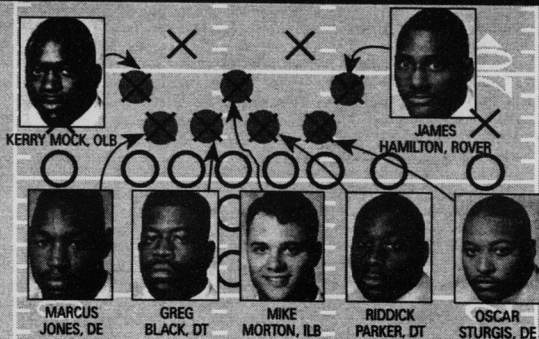
And the major point of that reloading



DTH FILE PHOTO

Co-captain Mike Morton, grasping for FSU's Charlie Ward, will start at middle linebacker in UNC's new 4-3 defense.

DEFENSIVE FRONT



comes with Jones.

After losing Austin Robbins and Troy Barnett to graduation, the 6-foot-6 junior steps squarely into the spotlight sporting a brand-new position — defensive end.

Well, sort of.

"He's playing somewhat of a different position," UNC head coach Mack Brown said. "We will use him inside and outside."

Whatever position the Jacksonville native ends up in, he's certain to draw a lot of attention.

"Marcus Jones is a force," defensive back Jimmy Hitchcock said. "He's gonna be the man this year. Offenses will have to contend with Marcus Jones first before they start their package. They will know that they have to block him."

Because of his speed, strength and overall charming character, Jones seems to be a sure-fire NFL pick. Just not this season.

"Not right now," said Jones, when asked if he would skip his senior season at UNC to play in the NFL. "I talked to my mom. Everybody has dreams about playing in the NFL. Right now, I'm just worried about where the team is going."

"I don't think I'm gonna look at it anymore. I'm basically gonna stay my four years here."

That's good news, because it means Jones will be playing alongside Black for the next two seasons.

Black will line up at defensive tackle. The 6-4 Gastonia native's speed should be his biggest change this season.

After weighing 330 pounds during much of the 1993 campaign, Black says he weighed in at 278 pounds Tuesday.

"I've gotten a whole lot quicker, and my endurance is up a whole lot," Black said.

His teammates also have noticed the dramatic change.

"Ooooooh," said Jones when asked about Black's weight loss. "Well, I'm gonna just say it like this: One day I saw Greg, and he was about 300 pounds. The next day I saw him he was like 285 to 290."

Translation: Black now possess quite a bit of speed for his size.

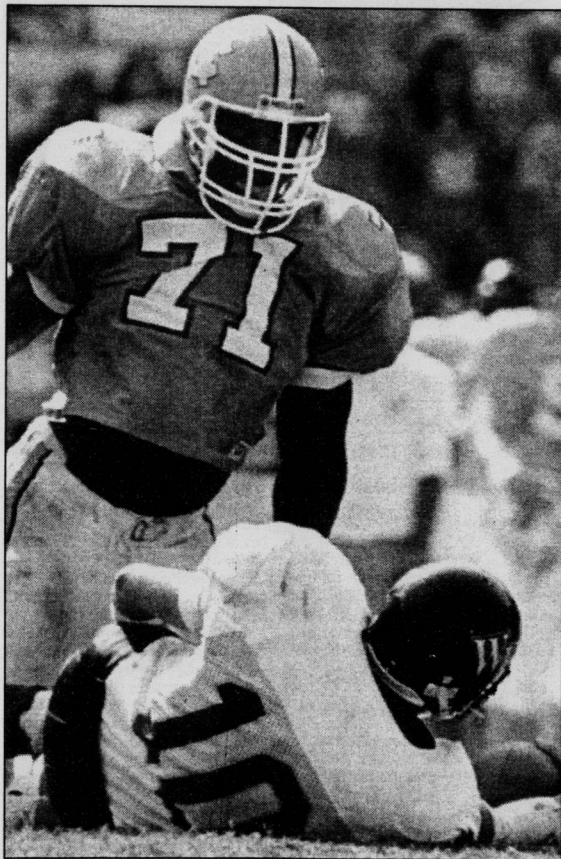
"When we were out here this summer running the mile laps, Greg just passed me by like I was standing still," Jones said. "I've never seen somebody weighing 280 to 290 running like he was a defensive back."

That increased agility and speed should mean a lot more playing time. And the coaching staff has already started singing Black's praises.

"Greg has reported back in better shape," said defensive tackle coach Ken Browning. "I think that tells you something about his willingness to prepare."

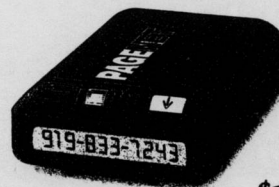
But Black isn't the only defender who has improved his speed.

"I think the defensive front is a little faster than last year," Jones said. "Last year, our average was like 4.9 (in the 40-yard dash). Now it's like 4.7 or 4.8. It will help out the rest of the defense to use the guys up front if they have that kind of speed."



This was a familiar scene in '93, as Marcus Jones led UNC with 8.5 sacks. This year, he is a candidate for All-American and the Outland Trophy.

NORTH CAROLINA, PAGE NET BRINGS YOU STATEWIDE COVERAGE FOR LESS THAN LOCAL RATES.



\$14.95 monthly
(including airtime)

ONE MONTH FREE PAGEMAIL®

PageNet, America's largest paging company, is bringing North Carolina the best paging service at the lowest prices possible. Rent a new Motorola Bravo Plus Display pager for our everyday low rate of only \$14.95 per month, including airtime.

We provide statewide coverage with superior building penetration, optional regional and nationwide coverage, generous quantity discounts and superior customer service. Call today and receive one month PageMail voice messaging service, FREE!

PAGENET®

America's Largest Paging Company

(919) 833-7243 or (800) 768-7243

4000 WestChase Blvd., Suite 190, Raleigh, NC 27607
(Conveniently located at Wade Ave. and Blue Ridge Rd.)