



# Watson Key Player Despite Lack of Glory at Fullback

BY ADAM DAVIS  
SPORTS EDITOR

Most of North Carolina's skill players know that if they don't get the ball on a given play, their time will come soon enough. But that isn't the case for one of the team's most important but least visible players — fullback Chris Watson. Watson has to throw his body into really big defensive players on most of UNC's plays. So when the team gets the ball down near the goal line, No. 6 gets fired up.

"In this offense, with all the weapons we've got, you have to beg for the chances you get," he said. "And when you get a chance, you'd better take advantage of it."

One chance the 5-11, 235-pound junior from Clayton will be getting for the first time is a starting position. Last season, he caddied for Malcolm Marshall and William Henderson. Watson rushed 11 times for 65 yards in '94, giving him 98 career yards.

But yardage isn't that important for Watson. His main job is to head into the hole before Leon Johnson and clean up whatever mess there is.

"You don't have to block the man right every time, because (Johnson) doesn't really need a hole, he just needs a crease to get through because his athletic ability is so good," Watson said. "So you just have to be able to give him a little bit of room, and he's able to operate."

Watson's biggest weakness is his lack of size, but he feels he can make up for it with his quickness.

Watson's role is so tied to Johnson's that Watson said his main

goal for '95 is for Johnson to achieve all of his personal goals. Johnson said he's confident that Watson can pick up where Henderson and Marshall left off.

"He's just as good as they are; it's just a matter of getting into position for the block," Johnson said. "That's one thing that he does that really helps me out when I'm making my choices."

Though Johnson and Watson work closely together, there's a huge gap in their notoriety. There are people in different time zones who know about Johnson, but Watson probably could walk down Franklin Street and not be recognized.

But Watson takes it in stride, saying that he doesn't expect people to notice the fullback. Besides, that's how he likes it.

"I think I'm kinda shy; I don't like all that attention," he said.

"It doesn't bother me because I don't really like the limelight, but being at that position, that comes with it, that's part of it. Leon's a great player, and he deserves everything he gets."

If Johnson and Watson work well together, the Tar Heels will have a strong running game to compliment Mike Thomas' aerials to Marcus Wall and Octavus Barnes.

Johnson said they already have a good line of communication.

"Sure, I can look at Chris, he's right across from me — we're real close friends, I can tell him little things, and he can tell me where I can run," Johnson said. "We communicate a lot on where he should play or where I should run."

And if Watson begs hard enough, maybe Johnson will be telling Watson where to run every once in a while as well.

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Chris Watson (6) said that because of UNC's offensive weapons, he sometimes has to beg to get the ball.

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