

Wall Shows Old Form With TD Return

BY ALEC MORRISON
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

ATLANTA — Marcus Wall has an impeccable sense of timing.

North Carolina's senior wideout and kick returner had been trying all season to find his niche with the team and post the numbers expected of him when the Tar Heels first took the field in 1995. Against Georgia Tech on Saturday, he finally found the right time to make his presence known.

Trailing 27-10 with 2:21 remaining in the third quarter, Wall and UNC took the field to return a Georgia Tech kickoff. The Yellow Jackets had just scored their second touchdown of the quarter by running right through an exhausted Tar Heel defense, and the game appeared to be firmly in Tech's grasp.

But on the ensuing kickoff, Wall found a way to loosen Georgia Tech's grip.

He grabbed the kickoff at the UNC 4-yard line and streaked down the right side of the field. After sidestepping the outstretched hand of one would-be tackler, Wall broke loose from another pair of Tech tacklers. From there, he simply turned on the jets and rolled to the end zone for a career-best 96-yard touchdown return.

"I just felt like I had to make a play, that if anything was going to be sparked, I definitely had to do it on that kickoff return," Wall said.

Quarterback Mike Thomas wasted no

time seizing the opportunity on the conversion, as he threw to Leon Johnson for the two-point play. Just like that, the Tar Heels were back in the game, down 27-18.

Wall also got the job done with the offense, catching three passes for 78 yards in the game.

But it was the second half, when UNC became bogged down offensively, that Wall helped the Tar Heels escape the mire.

Following a Georgia Tech punt early in the fourth quarter, Thomas began leading UNC downfield once more. After completing a 12-yard pass to flanker Octavus Barnes, Thomas dropped back on first down at the UNC 34.

He spotted Wall, who had managed to get wide open, down the left side. Thomas lofted a bomb to Wall, who made the grab for a 45-yard catch at the Georgia Tech 21.

Six plays later, the Tar Heels scored again to cut the lead to 27-25.

Strong safety Omar Brown said the defensive stop that led to UNC's touchdown drive was due to Wall's kickoff return.

"That was a big play, just for the team in general," Brown said of the kickoff. "We



MARCUS WALL caught three passes Sunday for 78 yards.

weren't going to quit, but at that point, that made us realize, 'We have to go. We have a chance.' I think that return was quite typical of the offense — Marcus and Octavus and Leon. They always seem to make the plays when we need it."

For Wall, Saturday's performance was an example of what has been expected of him throughout the season. After finishing second in the nation in kickoff return yardage last year and catching 29 passes for 569 yards, he looked to be an integral part of UNC's high-octane offense.

But while players like Thomas and Barnes have emerged to produce big numbers, Wall hasn't been heard from much in 1995. He said that changed today.

"I really felt in a rhythm today," he said. "I felt like I was back to my old self. I've been playing okay and great in some situations, but it's been more consistent now."

Wall said he may have been thinking too much about scoring in the early part of the year.

"I just wanted to score so much," he said. "I was taking my eye off the ball — not concentrating is basically what it boils down to. Concentration."

Wall's return and reception incited a tougher defensive effort from UNC. But while the defense was able to keep Georgia Tech out of the end zone in the fourth quarter, the offense came up short on what could have been the game-winning drive when Thomas was picked off near midfield.

But while UNC came up short at the end, the team may never have had the chance without Wall's return.

Wall said he simply tried to return to last season's form in returning the ball.

"Coach Moody came to me and asked me to go back and look at the films from last year where I was on my toes at times, hitting the holes and making it happen," he said.

"He was right a hundred percent. That's what I did today. I just went back to the way I used to do it."

Boxer Dies From Injuries Suffered in British Bout

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GLASGOW, Scotland — Scottish boxer James Murray died Sunday of injuries suffered in a title fight with Drew Docherty, leading to a renewal of calls for the sport to be banned in Britain.

Richard Morgan, a spokesman at Glasgow's Southern General Hospital, said doctors had pronounced Murray "clinically dead" Saturday but left him on a life support machine.

They reassessed his condition Sunday, decided he was dead and then removed him from the machine.

The 25-year-old Murray underwent brain surgery following the knockout by Docherty in the final round of the British bantamweight championship fight Friday night.

Docherty, who appeared anxious about Murray's condition even as he was being

hailed the winner in the ring, was said to be "shattered" by the news of his death.

His manager, Tommy Gilmour, issued a brief statement that read: "Words just cannot express how badly we feel about James' death."

Our thoughts are with his family and friends."

"The whole family is devastated, just devastated," said Murray's father, Kenneth.

David McKendrick, a family friend, said: "The village will never get over this. James was a great example in this area where it's all too easy for kids to slide into drugs and drinking Buckfast wine."

The knockout started a riot at ringside, in which five people suffered minor cuts and several people were arrested. The death and riot prompted more calls for the sport to be banned.

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