

Tar Heels land lineman-laden class in addition to bevy of skill players

BY JOSEPH ROLISON
SENIOR WRITER

One might have expected North Carolina football coach Carl Torbush to be antsy as his first recruiting season rolled around.

Even a little short-sightedness would be understandable from Torbush. After all, just surviving the first recruiting season is a success for some coaches.

But Torbush looked past the immediate confusion and instead worried over the future of UNC football. To allay those fears, on Wednesday he signed nine linemen — the Tar Heels' greatest future need — in a recruiting class that might rank in the top 15 in America.

The Tar Heels' real success, however, wasn't their prized class. Rather, Torbush relished the fact that North Carolina — despite the coaching turmoil in December — reeled in exactly the players it wanted.

"We left like everything fell into place for us," Torbush said at a press conference. "... This is a great recruiting class — we were able to meet all our needs."

North Carolina's incoming class doesn't lack for skill, either. The Tar Heels ventured to Florida and

Mississippi to ink highly sought-after receivers. One of those wideouts, Bradenton, Fla., native Bosley Allen, chose UNC over Florida State and Tennessee. UNC then looked to the Northwest to sign quarterback Luke Huard, Washington's top prospect.

The Tar Heels fared well in state, too, snatching 6-foot-7, 240-pound athlete Julius Peppers of Bailey, Peppers, who is considered the top prospect in North Carolina, ran for over 3,500 yards in his career. At UNC, however, he'll likely fit in at defensive end.

More important, Peppers stuck with North Carolina even after former Tar Heel coach Mack Brown left for Texas in December. Peppers' show of fidelity resonated with several other signees.

"He was the key to getting our recruiting going again," Torbush said,



UNC football coach CARL TORBUSH said the Tar Heels were able to meet all their needs with the players that signed on Wednesday.

noting that eight other players recommended after Peppers did so.

Huard, like Peppers, almost jumped ship when Brown went to Texas in December. But rather than panicking, Torbush simply re-recruited the Puyallup, Wash., native.

And in the most unlikely of situations, Huard — whose two brothers starred at Washington — journeyed cross-country and re-committed to UNC.

"He had no reason to come here," Torbush said. "... He'll be a great leader."

Although the Tar Heels signed 19 players Wednesday, Torbush said the recruiting process isn't finished. North Carolina will continue to pursue a handful of athletes who have not yet signed with a school.

Also, the Tar Heels rewarded two walk-ons who made an impact last season. Cornerback Steve Fisher, who is expected to start next year, and defensive end Ross McAllister both earned scholarships.

Torbush also said he had not yet decided on a new offensive coordinator.

He said, "I'm going to make sure the right guy comes in here and give us a perfect fit."

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