

Parker Hopes to Join List of 1,000-Yard Backs

BY BRET STRELOW
Assistant Sports Editor

Willie Parker looks at the list every time he enters the North Carolina football team's meeting room.

Parker stares in awe when he sees the names of the 15 rushers in UNC history who have amassed 24 1,000-yard rushing seasons.

The list includes Tar Heel greats such as Mike Voight, Amos Lawrence and Kelvin Bryant.

Parker watched UNC games as a youngster when the likes of Leon Johnson, Curtis Johnson and Natrone Means reached the 1,000-yard plateau.

Parker would love to add his name to the coveted list before he leaves UNC.

"I used to say that I wanted to be like them one day playing in that Carolina blue," Parker said.

Parker's dream will come true this season. After redshirting last year, Parker became the starting tailback during spring practice.

He's slated to see his first game action in Saturday's season opener against Tulsa.

"Willie Parker has shown that he has the athletic tools to be an outstanding tailback, but he has not played at game," UNC coach Carl Torbush said. "We don't know how he'll respond to



DTH/MILLER PEARSALE

Freshman Willie Parker, right, redshirted last season but earned the starting tailback job coming out of spring practice.

60,000 people until he gets out there. But I do think he has a chance to be a really, really good tailback."

If Parker falters, Torbush has confidence that a pair of freshmen could step right in and fill his shoes.

Brandon Russell and Andre Williams

played well enough in fall practice to bypass juniors Rufus Brown and Domonique Williams on the depth chart.

Russell is listed as the No. 2 tailback. He rushed for 1,697 yards and 29 touchdowns as a senior last year at Marist High School in Decatur, Ga.

Andre Williams, who played at Northern Durham High School, amassed 2,146 rushing yards and scored 36 touchdowns as a senior.

"We're excited about that position, but we're still a little bit worried because all of them are young," Torbush said. "Of the three guys who we say are first, second and third team at this point, none of them have played in a varsity football game."

With Domonique Williams's decision this week to transfer, Brown is the only Tar Heel tailback who has any experience. Brown led the Tar Heels with 534 rushing yards in 1998 but struggled through injuries last year and finished with 275 yards.

Torbush will rely on two other veterans to open up holes for his young tailbacks.

Senior Ronnie Robinson will start for the Tar Heels. He replaces three-year starter Deon Dyer, who was drafted by the Miami Dolphins.

Robinson backed up Dyer last season and scored two touchdowns in an early-season win against Indiana.

He had only seven rushing attempts all of last season.

"We lost probably the best fullback I've ever been around in Deon Dyer," Torbush said. "It's really hard to replace him, but I think Ronnie Robinson is

doing very well right now."

Junior Anthony Saunders serves as a capable backup to Robinson. Saunders started four games at tailback for North Carolina last year and rushed for a team-high 110 yards in a loss at Georgia Tech.

1,000-Yard Club

Player	Year	Yards
Don McCauley	1969	1,092
Don McCauley	1970	1,720
Sammy Johnson	1973	1,006
James Betterson	1974	1,082
Mike Voight	1974	1,033
Mike Voight	1975	1,250
Mike Voight	1976	1,407
Amos Lawrence	1977	1,211
Amos Lawrence	1978	1,043
Amos Lawrence	1979	1,019
Amos Lawrence	1980	1,118
Kelvin Bryant	1980	1,039
Kelvin Bryant	1981	1,015
Kelvin Bryant	1982	1,064
Ethan Horton	1983	1,107
Tyrone Anthony	1983	1,063
Ethan Horton	1984	1,247
Derrick Fenner	1986	1,250
Kennard Martin	1988	1,146
Natrone Means	1991	1,030
Natrone Means	1992	1,195
Curtis Johnson	1993	1,034
Leon Johnson	1993	1,012
Jonathan Linton	1997	1,004

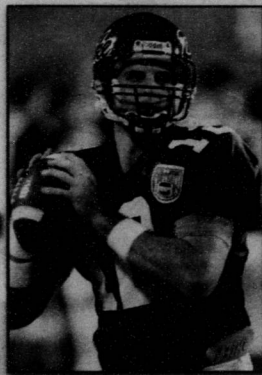
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New Faces Dominate UNC Special Teams

The Tar Heels' special teams lost three kickers from the 1999 squad and will have to rely on unproven legs.

BY RACHEL CARTER
Assistant Sports Editor

Call it the X factor.

The defense is older, wiser and has a strong corps of linebackers leading it.

The offense is young and should impress under the stylings of new offensive coordinator Mike O'Cain.

But say special teams, and no one's quite sure how to handicap that section of the North Carolina football squad.

In last year's disastrous 3-8 season, practically the only UNC coach Carl Torbush could count on were the legs of his punter Brian Schmitz and kicker Josh McGee.

Schmitz, the only Tar Heel to earn first-team All-America honors by The Sporting News last year, punted for a 47.8-yard average in 1999 to set a single-season ACC record.

McGee made 81 percent of his field goal attempts and set a UNC single-game record with six field goals in the

Tar Heels' 38-0 victory against Duke last November.

But Schmitz and McGee have moved on, and suddenly the kicking question looms large.

Jeff Reed, the player slated to replace McGee, said he's trying not to let the pressure get to him.

"I know I have big shoes to fill," Reed said. A senior from Charlotte, Reed has yet to kick in a college game.

"None of these guys we have this year have kicked one time in a game."

CARL TORBUSH
UNC Football Coach

practice. He's been a little bit inconsistent on his extra points and field goals, and again we won't know how good he can be until he gets out there in front of

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Senior walk-on Jeff Reed has never kicked in a college game, but he has been impressive on kickoffs.

"None of these guys we have this year have kicked one time in a game," Torbush said before the team's first scrimmage. "Jeff Reed is a walk-on and has been kicking exceptionally well on kickoffs in