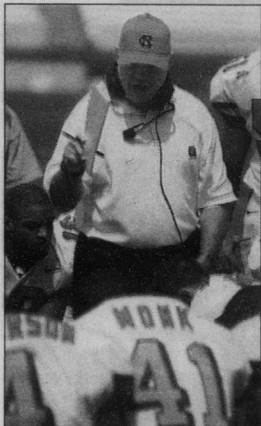


DTH FILE PHOTO

John Bunting is not afraid to let people know when he's upset. In fact, he's yelling (above), "That's your fault, coaches, that's your fault," during UNC's Spring Game at Kenan Stadium. His role during games has not been decided yet, but he won't be calling offensive or defensive plays (right).

## JOHN BUNTING



DTH/SEFTON IPOCK

- says he's "very thankful" to UNC Director of Athletics Dick Baddour for the opportunity to coach at North Carolina.
- likes to tell team stories about his former UNC coach Bill Dooley.
- also played two years in the USFL after an 11-year NFL career with Philadelphia.
- owns an ACC Championship (1971) and a Super Bowl (2000) ring.
- decided not to coach in pros until his children were grown because he didn't want a nomad lifestyle for them.
- loves the movie "The Deer Hunter."
- married to Dawn, a former college women's basketball and softball coach.
- started 119 of 133 career NFL games at linebacker.
- says about making UNC a top program, "it's going to be fun. Building a football team is always fun."

# Meet the DIREC

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FOR MAKING HIS BELOVED SCHO

Dec. 11, 2000, North Carolina faithful finally met the man charged with resurrecting its fallen football program.

The faithful knew UNC used to be something. For the younger, memories of 1997 lingered, swirling in the backs of their minds as they watched North Carolina's football team limp to 3-8 and 6-5 seasons under Carl Torbush in 1999 and 2000.

For the older, the good ol' days of Bill Dooley, the man who turned the Tar Heels around in the '70s and brought home three ACC titles, made it clear that the laid-back Torbush just wasn't cutting it. They knew it had been 20 long years since North Carolina had held the ACC Championship in its hands.

Both young and old fans alike have had their hearts broken. Although 1997 might have been one of North Carolina's greatest years ever, it was bittersweet, tainted almost by the abrupt departure of Mack Brown.

Brown's legacy as the Tar Heels' coach was turning a team that went 0-11 in two straight seasons into a national contender. And his legacy was riding out of town before the Gator Bowl to coach at football-crazy Texas.

The faithful cried turnout, knowing that Texas offered Brown a hefty sum. Brown will return to Chapel Hill as Texas' coach in 2002. The faithful will be ready.

Stepping smoothly into Brown's place was Carl Torbush, a man so popular with the players that they lobbied Director of Athletics Dick Baddour to hire him in 1997.

Torbush was also so popular that in the aftermath of his dismissal, professors protested Baddour and Chancellor James Moeser's decision.

To replace Torbush, Baddour went looking for a proven coach and chased Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer. Beamer seemed perfect. He plucked the Hokies from obscurity and led them to the promised land of the national championship game.

The faithful wondered what he could do for the Tar Heels.

Nothing, as it turned out. Beamer flirted with UNC, but used North Carolina to earn a fat raise from his athletic department. The faithful were hurt, disappointed. They felt used. They vented their frustrations at Baddour, likening the Beamer debacle to the public humiliation of Roy Williams turning them down for the head basketball job. They were angry.

So, Dec. 11, Baddour did the only thing he could do to make the faithful happy. He hired one of their own.

His father cried.

When John Bunting broke the news to his parents that he would be returning to his alma mater to become its head coach, his 81-year-old father wept.

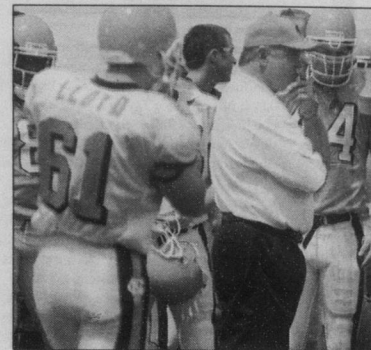
Basketball, like for so many, drew the boy from Silver Spring, Md., to North Carolina. He grew up watching Dean Smith. When the University came calling in the person of Bill Dooley, Bunting signed on to play linebacker. Says UNC senior linebacker Quincy Monk: "He's like a diehard Tar Heel fan. He's going to make the best of it. This is his home."

Walking onto campus in 1968, the life Bunting knows now began to take shape. Intent on building something out of the North Carolina football program, Dooley demanded an emotional commitment from his players — the same commitment Bunting now demands from the Tar Heels. Upon returning to Chapel Hill in December, Bunting met with the team's seniors, and then the rest of the team, and told them they could be winners. Nine months later, Bunting still finds himself trying to convince the Tar Heels that they can win.

"I think what we established in this first training camp together is a work ethic," Bunting says. "I think they needed to learn how to work harder at what we're doing. It's both mental and it's physical, certainly, but it's also emotional. I mean, you just can't go out on that field and expect things to happen. You have to have an emotional commitment to it before you go out on the field. You step across that line from being a student and now step across that line to be an athlete who wants to achieve."

Achieving is something Bunting knows a lot about. Not a particularly large linebacker, he played college ball on his intensity, the same intensity that keeps UNC's players on their toes in practice. He earned an ACC championship ring in 1971 and started for three years. And Bunting then took his game to the next level and had an 11-year career in the NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles.

After his pro career ended, Bunting found work as an assistant football coach in the United States Football League and then at Brown University. He hated it — coaching was awfully hard work, and he didn't like the



"I WANT TO SEE  
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By RACHEL CARTER ■ SPORTS