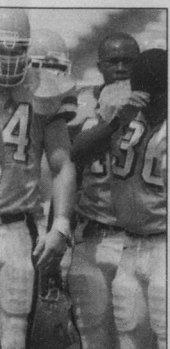


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JOHN BUNTING HAS BIG PLANS SCHOOL RETURN TO THE TOP



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idea of dragging his family all over the country. But when he accepted a job helping out at Division III Glassboro (N.J.) State University (now Rowan), he fell in love with coaching. And he discovered that he had a real knack for coaching. As head coach, he led Glassboro to a perfect regular season and a berth in the NCAA semifinals. By then, his two children, Kimberly and Brooks, were grown up, and he decided to go back to his home in the NFL. "I was asked to come to Kansas City in the pros," Bunting says. "And I said, 'I gotta do it. I played in the Super Bowl, and I'd love to go to the Super Bowl as a coach.'"

The ring is gaudy. The sheer size of Bunting's St. Louis Rams Super Bowl ring is so ridiculous that it's too uncomfortable for Bunting to wear. But it was on display when he introduced three important guys in January before a UNC-Maryland basketball game. Offensive coordinator Gary Tranquill. Defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta. Strength coach Jeff Connors. Three guys that burn with the same intensity as Bunting does.

"Coach, he goes at it," cornerback Kevin Knight says. "He wants to be out there. You can tell by the things that he does that he wants to be out there. That's what we need. He won't step down for nobody. Like people doubting us for playing Oklahoma, he's not going to back down, we're not going to back down."

The ring, the guys, they're symbols. In practice, the 71-year-old Tranquill gets hopping mad and threatens the offensive players with laps if they get the formation wrong one more time. Tenuta screams with veins bulging in his neck at the defensive backs who allow senior wide receiver Kory Bailey to pull down a pass in practice. "I wanted coaches who had experience or had a special aura around them that kind of resembled my personality," Bunting says. "I want them to be intense. I want them to coach hard." The ring, coupled with his ACC championship one, is a constant reminder of the success that such intensity has brought him.

"He knows what he's doing because he played in college," Knight says. "He played here. He played in the NFL. He coached in the NFL. He knows the game, and everything you need to do to be perfect."

But obtaining perfection with the Tar Heels is a difficult task, and Bunting knows that. He estimates the Tar Heels are two to three years away from being really good. "It's going to take some time," he says. "It's not going to take a lot of time, but it's going to take some time. It's going to take some patience. It's going to take a lot of hard work." This year, he thinks they'll be competitive. And they'd better be competitive — the players don't want to bring Bunting's displeasure down on them. Monk likens Bunting to a parent who can straighten a kid out with "The Look."

In June, Bunting kicked Jamal Jones and JaVon Lewis off the team and suspended David Stevenson, who left the team in August, weeks later. He refused to let backup quarterback Luke Huard practice with the team when he showed up to training camp overweight. Bunting is not afraid to take players off the field as punishment. He's a big believer in discipline. "He really gets out there and lets you know what you're doing wrong," defensive end Julius Peppers says. "It doesn't matter who you are — if you're Julius Pepper or Ronald Curry or Joe Blow." But for all of his seemingly harsh actions, the UNC coaching staff is helping Jones, Lewis and Stevenson relocate to other programs.

Bunting's shoot-from-the-hip personality landed himself in some trouble earlier in the month. He was quoted in local newspapers angrily accusing former UNC punter Blake Ferguson of cowardice for leaving the program. "I said several positive things about Blake that did not reach the papers," Bunting says. "But I regret the negative things I said about Blake, I do." Bunting has apologized to Ferguson and his family and to the school. "It's an embarrassment. I hope I don't make that mistake again."

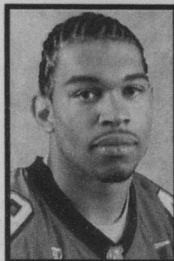
Bunting hasn't really thought about what he wants his legacy to be — his first game is Saturday. But as his team practices in Norman, Okla., they'll watch "Men of Honor" on the plane, a movie Bunting loves. And when they get out onto the field at Kenan Stadium this year, they'll run to the music from "Gladiator," one of the team's favorites. They're starting new traditions. For now, it's baby steps to building his legacy as a faithful coach. But, he's got a pretty good idea what direction he'd like the team to go during his tenure at his alma mater. "I want to see this program return to being a top 10 team every year," he says. "I want to see this program in the class way that Carolina is."

SPORTS EDITOR

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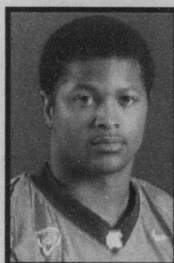
JULIUS PEPPERS IS DESTINED TO HAVE HIS NAME IN LIGHTS, AND RONALD CURRY'S NO B-MOVIE ACTOR HIMSELF. TOGETHER WITH UNC'S NEW COORDINATORS, THE TWO COULD MAKE MAGIC EVEN HOLLYWOOD WOULD ENVY.

JULIUS PEPPERS AS THE DEFENSIVE END



- expects to be the No. 1 draft pick at the NFL Draft next April
- will be double-teamed by most offensive lines he faces this season
- fell one sack short of tying Lawrence Taylor's single-season sack record set in 1980 but still lead the nation
- selected by CNN.com and CollegeFootballNews.com as a first-team All-America
- needs 12 sacks to break Greg Ellis' UNC career record of 32.5

RONALD CURRY AS THE QUARTERBACK



- still trying to prove himself as NFL or NBA material
- set UNC's record with 2,676 total yards of offense in 2000
- comfortable with improvising; not afraid to scramble
- with young offensive line, making quick decision will be key
- as of Aug. 11, still was not "on the same page" as offensive coordinator Gary Tranquill
- says his greatest athletic moment was playing with and against Michael Jordan.

JON TENUTA AS THE DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR



- coached five past years at Ohio State
- every one of Tenuta's players at OSU was selected in the NFL Draft
- married to Dori and has three sons, Zach (11), Matt (7) and Luke (1)
- with young offensive line, making quick decision will be key
- instituting a pro-style defense
- during drills, stands 20 to 25 yards downfield to watch practice.
- considered one of the nation's top secondary coaches
- faces a serious problem with depth on line and with linebackers

GARY TRANQUILL AS THE OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR



- entering his 40th year as a coach
- married to Shirley and has two grown children, Kari and Chris, and has six grandchildren
- considered retirement before getting offered the North Carolina offensive coordinating job
- has added motion and tricks to the offensive scheme
- inducted into Wittenberg's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1986.
- has been to 11 bowls in his college coaching career