

# 5'8" Pollock grows into bigger role

By **AARON FITT**

SENIOR WRITER

Save your breath. Jarwarski Pollock has heard them all.

He knows he's short. He takes gibes from defenders all the time.

Just last week, a Florida State defensive back said about the junior North Carolina receiver, "We need to knock that little chipmunk out."

But Pollock's used to it. He knew how to take it.

"It was a good one," Pollock said. "I started laughing after that one."

When you're a 5-foot-8-inch, 170-pound football player, you get used to the verbal jabs.

Even from reporters. One skeptically asked Pollock on Tuesday if he is really 5 feet 8.

Pollock grunted and sported a big, sheepish grin.

"Probably not," he said. "Probably like 5-7 1/2."

Teammates think Pollock sometimes gets overlooked by opponents because of his size, and he has always been able to take advantage of that fact. Pollock answered his Seminole trash-talkers last week with an eight-reception, 71-yard performance — one of the very few encouraging aspects of UNC's 37-0 loss.

"Him being small, he can get underestimated," said UNC cornerback Derrick Johnson. "But at the same time, you have to be aware, you know. He's small, so there must be something he can do good. You underestimate him and he'll just run right past you."

That's what Pollock did last Saturday, in the process emerging as a comfortable target for quarterback Darian Durant, who had been searching all training camp for a go-to receiver to replace Sam Aiken and Chesley Borders.

There was speculation that Pollock was too small to be the number one receiver, that he was too small to be anything more than an auxiliary target. Sure, the little guy was a nice third option for Durant last year, somebody to sneak across the middle on slants while Aiken and Borders went deep.

But could he handle being The Guy?

Pollock, for one, thought so. "I love being the number one guy," he said. "Who wouldn't love being the number one guy, knowing that everyone's counting on you

to make a play when the team needs you?"

Just as importantly, Durant now thinks Pollock can be his top receiver, as well.

"Jaws understands the game, and he always seems to get open and make plays after he catches the ball," Durant said after the Florida State game. "He's a tremendous receiver, and he and I seem to be on the same page a lot. Hopefully we'll continue to be that way."

Durant and Pollock first developed a connection early

last season. In a back-and-forth shootout against Syracuse in the Carrier Dome, the inexperienced Pollock burst into the consciousness of Tar Heel fans.

With his team trailing 21-16 early in the fourth quarter, Pollock outran his defenders on a deep post pattern and Durant found him in stride. The 49-yard touchdown put UNC ahead for good.

"It was a play that decided the game, really," Pollock said. "It was a touchdown. The first of my career."

It was even sweeter for Pollock because he had waited so long. As a partial qualifier, Pollock was forced to sit out his freshman year.

"Mentally it was hard because I wanted to get out there and play so bad," Pollock said. "At least one snap, but I couldn't, because of my partial, my test scores."

Now that he's on the field, though, Pollock is determined to take advantage of the opportunity.

There's a reason there aren't too many sub-5-foot-8 football players. It takes an unbelievable amount of dedication to be competitive with bigger players. UNC coach John Bunting said much of Pollock's success comes from his constant desire to improve. And improve he has.

"He was a good player last year, he's a very good player now," Bunting said. "He's gained confidence, and he has much more awareness of our system, therefore I think he can make more plays. He has a knack; he catches the ball well. He's very competitive. He's a good football player, and he's gotten better because he really works hard at it."

Johnson has noticed Pollock's development while covering him in practice.

"He's improved a lot," Johnson said. "I think Jarwarski is one of the smartest receivers I've dealt with. His knowledge of the game is real good. He's very quick and he runs good routes."

Pollock's favorite route is a post corner, but he's so effective running slants that Bunting continues to utilize him in the middle of the field.

The middle, of course, is where hard-hitting safeties lurk, eager to punish small receivers like Pollock. But he knows how to protect himself.

"I fall down most of the time," Pollock said. "I know how to shield myself to keep from taking a big hit. I've taken a lot of hits but I've never taken a really big hit."

It's that intelligence that has enabled Pollock to carve out a niche for himself, despite his size.

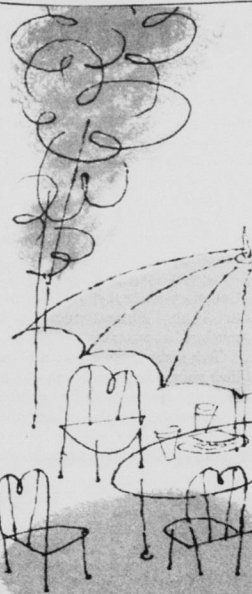
"There's a place for those (small) guys," Bunting said. "They do it in the NFL and they do it in college. You're amazed at how they do it because they are so small, but he is a good football player."



DTH/GARRETT HALL

Jawarski Pollock (5) had eight catches for 72 yards in the season opener against Florida State. He likely will develop into QB Darian Durant's go-to receiver.

**Panera**  
BREAD



Chill with your friends!  
Hearty Sandwiches!  
Delicious Soups!  
Freshly Tossed Salads!  
Espresso Drinks!  
Bagels, Breads +  
Pastries!

**213 W. Franklin Street**  
Just in front of Granville Towers

Phone - 929-9189

Fax - 929-9186

Mon-Thurs 6:30AM-9PM

Fri/Sat 6:30AM-10PM

Sunday 7:30AM-9PM

**Free Bagel**

With purchase of any Espresso Drink, I.C. Drink, or Hot Chocolate.



Valid at Panera Bread locations in the Triangle  
Valid through September 20, 2003.

**Save \$1.00**

On any Sandwich, Salad or "You Pick Two."



Valid at Panera Bread locations in the Triangle  
Valid through September 20, 2003.