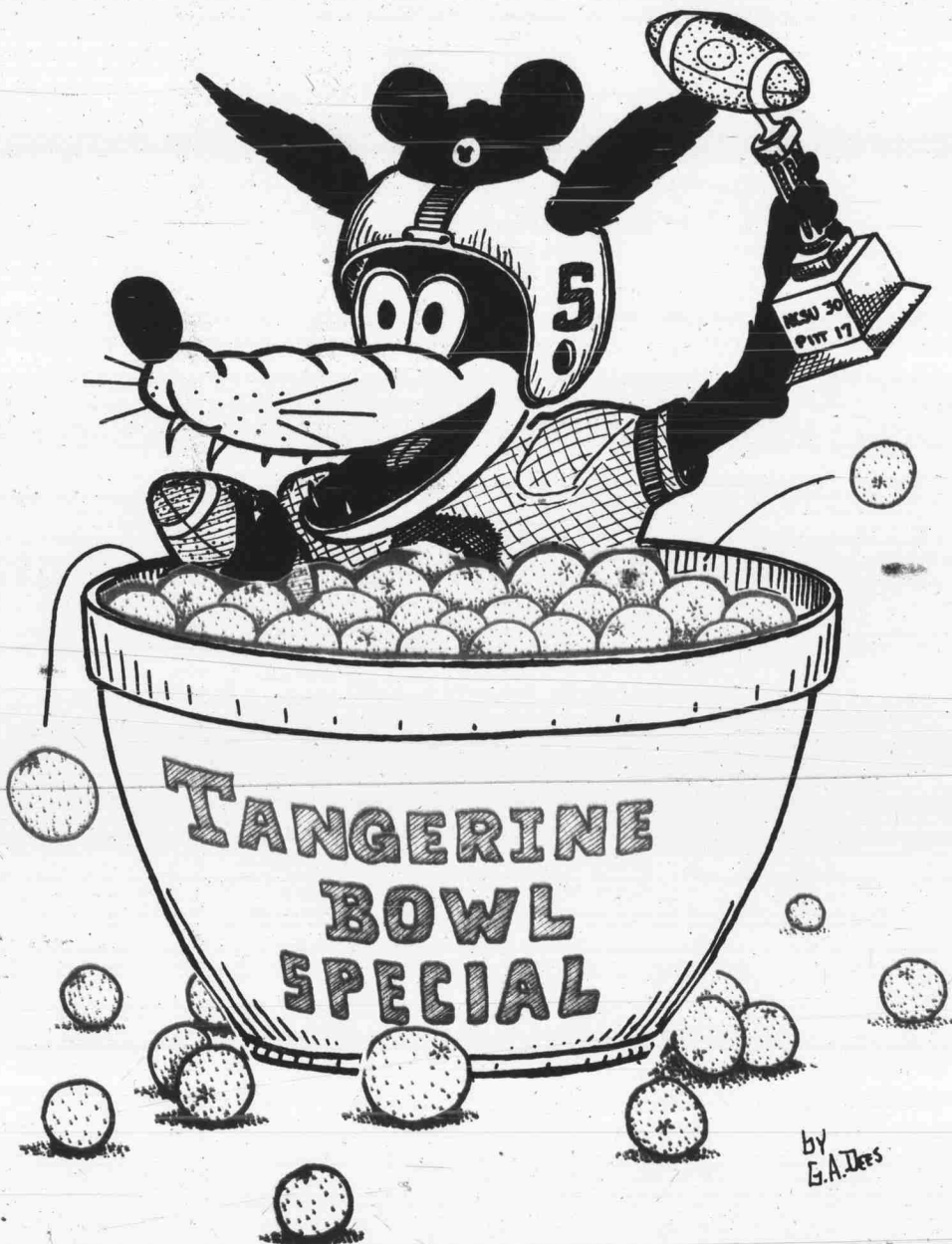


Technician



Wolfpack improving with age

by Danny Jacobs
Sports Editor

What a difference a few years can make.

Two years ago at this time, many Wolfpack partisans were calling for Bo Rein's head after a frustrating 3-7-1 rookie season that snapped State's consecutive bowl string at four. Now, while savoring the Pack's 30-17 Tangerine Bowl verdict over much-heralded Pitt, those same partisans probably still want Rein's head. Except this time it would likely be for a bust to be sculpted for posterity.

In the field of sports, particularly major college revenue sports (football and basketball), there is no substitute for winning. And to do it on television (albeit the Mizou network) makes it that much the better.

For the second year in a row, the Wolfpack thoroughly dismantled a favored opponent, leaving no room for debate as to which was the better team on that night. Trick plays, poor officiating or lucky breaks had nothing to do with the outcome. Pure and simple, it was a matter of State out-executing its opposition.

A year ago, it was Big Eight (thought by many to be the strongest conference in the nation at the time) runner-up Iowa State that fell prey to the disciplined Wolfpack attack by a 24-14 count that was not as close as the final score might indicate. In 1978, the year that John Travolta and the Bee Gees made producer Robert Stigwood a marvelled man, it was the then 13th-ranked Panthers who were carved into ineffectual pieces by the Pack.

It makes one wonder if State should appear only in bowl games because it certainly seems that Rein's teams save their best for last. In fact, State's record in its last seven bowl appearances is an impressive 5-1-1 mark. Not too shabby for a team that has a difficult time cracking the Top 20 each fall.

After the Tangerine Bowl win, Rein pleaded with the press, "How about voting our team in the Top 20. There aren't 18 or 19 teams in the country better than this one. This team belongs in the Top 20. We could have beaten anybody tonight."

Perhaps the pollsters took heed of Rein's words, but more likely they took notice of the manner in which the Pack treated Pitt. Whatever the case, State finished the season tied for 19th in the UPI poll and 18th in the AP rankings.

Nose guard John Stanton, the game's Most Valuable Defensive Player, served notice to the Panthers on the first play of the game that the Pack meant business. Stanton broke through the Pitt offensive line, sacking quarterback Rick Trocano for the first of six times on the night. Stanton and defensive mates took it from there, limiting the Panthers to three first downs in the first half as State took a 17-0 lead.

"Pitt's defense got a lot more press than ours but we showed a lot of people a few things tonight. Emotion was a key part of what went on out there," noted Rein. "This game meant a lot to us, both to the coaches and the players. Our kids just wanted it more than Pitt did."

"I think the tempo might have been set on the first play of the game when John Stanton sacked the quarterback. When two evenly-matched teams play, never

underestimate emotions. And we were ready. Our offense got the big play in the first half and our defense stopped them.

"Our kids made great preparations for the game. They executed better. Weihn you whip a team thatsoundly, it's a team effort."

It seemed obvious from the sidelines that State had something to prove to itself in the Tangerine Bowl. Not only was it a chance to atone to a degree for embarrassing losses to Maryland and Clemson and atough 19-10 loss to Penn State (then No. 1 ranked) during the regular season. But it was a chance to put a cork in the Panthers' overconfident mouths.

Throughout the week before Saturday's game, Pitt players made no effort to conceal the fact that they believed they were above the Wolfpack, particularly when it came to playing football. Late for press conferences and late to bed at night, the Panthers showed little respect for their opponent.

In fact all-America Hugh Green went around the Pitt locker room before the game saying, "Come on. Those guys think they can beat us. They think they can win."

That was reason enough to work up a good "hate" for Pitt, but it was one step further. A step that ired State's players.

During the week long promotional tour, State visited a home for crippled children and presented gifts to each. The Panthers followed State to the home and told the children that they would only give them their gifts if the children exchanged them for State's gifts. More than one State player pointed to that in the locker room after the game as adding incentive to the team.

On the field though, it was obvious that State simply out-performed its counterparts in practically every phase of the game. While the defense was stifling Pitt's offense, State's offense was grinding out consistent yardage through the heart of the vaunted Pitt defense. Pitt nose guard Dave Logan made the mistake of noting that, "Ritcher looks quick but he doesn't look very physical." Suffice to say that the Pack's all-America center heard those words and proceeded to prove Logan incorrect.

"This could have been our best game again this season," claimed Ritcher. "We wanted it real bad for the seniors on the team. We wanted to send them out the right way. I think we did."

It was, as Rein said, a team effort—a total team effort. Ted Brown capped a brilliant State career, rushing for 126 yards on 28 carries and one touchdown to pace the Pack's ground attack. Runningmate Billy Ray Vickars chipped in 50 yards on 12 carries, keeping the Panthers off balance. At quarterback, both Scott Smith and John Isley were successful. Smith completed five of six passes for 52 yards in addition to running State's veer impeccably while Isley hooked up with Lee Jukes on a 56-yard scoring pass that staked the Wolfpack to its 17-0 lead.

All the while the offensive line took control of the line of scrimmage. Chris Dieterich handled all-America Hugh Green while linemates Ritcher, Tim Gillespie, Frank Hitt and Chuck Stone drove their men off the ball time after time.

Appraised Brown, "Our interior line

blocking was what enabled us to control the ball."

But as Rein noted, it was probably Stanton that set the tone for the game on the first play from scrimmage. That can be expanded to the entire defense throttling the Panther offense and setting repeatedly up the Pack offense in enviable field position. Throughout the regular season, State's defense rose to the occasion many times. The Tangerine Bowl was no different, if not more impressive. Though prone to give up meaningless touchdowns late in the game, the Pack defenders were a scrappy bunch with the game on the line.

"Our kids wanted to beat a nationally ranked football team," said defensive coordinator Chuck Amato. "All year that's what they've wanted to do. We came so close against Penn State. They came in at halftime and wanted to shut these suckers out."

"We didn't do anything different. We did the things we've been doing all along. We were healthier this game than we've been since the fifth game of the season and we just executed what we wanted to do."

Though the Pack defenders lost their shutout on a field goal on Pitt's initial second half possession, they never let the Panthers establish a consistent offensive attack. And, with State leading 23-3 midway through the final period, they threw up a goal-line stand that for three plays was awesome.

Though Pitt runningback Ray Rooster Jacobs scampered past the outstretched

Bubba Green into the corner of the end zone on fourth down for the TD, State had proved its point. The Panthers had a first-and-goal situation from the two yard line but were unable to break the end zone on three successive smashes into the middle. There was no running over the Pack.

Finally, strong safety Mike Nall put the game out of reach with a 66-yard pass interception for a touchdown with five minutes left in the game. It was a most fitting way for the Pack to close-out its scoring.

With the win, State sounded a strong note for Atlantic Coast Conference football. Though Maryland got embarrased by Texas, Clemson with its over Ohio State and the Wolfpack restored the ACC's name to respected standing. What's the bottom line? How will the win help recruiting?

"It should help," noted Amato. "We had a great showing against Penn State and a great win over Pitt. Now people know we can play with the big teams. We beat the hell out of one and played the then No. 1 team in the country pretty even."

Pitt head coach Jackie Sherrill noted after the game, "We'll probably go to a fullback set next year. They played extremely well and we didn't. I'm glad the season's over."

For Rein and the Wolfpack, it may just be the beginning.

* * *

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Cowher, Wescoe win MVP

by Denny Jacobs
Sports Editor

This year, the Technician initiates the Wolfpack Most Valuable Football Player of the year award as judged by members of the staff. State football fortunes have improved appreciably, particularly over the past decade, and it seems only fitting to recognize an individual for his consistently outstanding contributions to the team during the season.

The criteria for the award is varied, including on-field accomplishments, dedication to the team, leadership qualities, and relative importance to overall team success. Also, it is presented to the player who best exemplifies the character of Wolfpack football for a given year.

There were many talented athletes who contributed greatly to the success enjoyed by State's '78 squad and obviously, it was not an easy decision to make. But, while there were several players with fine credentials, there were two players who stood out. And, when it comes to the game of football, there is simply no way of separating this pair.

So, it is with pride that the Technician names Bill Cowher and Kyle Wescoe as co-winners of the first annual Most Valuable Football Player of the year award. Each will receive a plaque commencing his selection.

It's become a familiar scene, replayed time and again during the past four seasons.

As the fleet-footed running back jitters his way through the initial wave of defenders, he suddenly finds himself stretched out on the turf under a gang of tacklers. And, while the bodies unravel for the next play, Bill Cowher and Kyle Wescoe are odds-on favorites to be at, or at least near, the bottom of the heap.

After all, that's their job as linebackers—to make tackles. And neither has earned a reputation for shirking responsibility on the gridiron. Quite the opposite, in fact. This menacing duo has been involved in enough "hits" to warrant wall space in the local post office.

Indeed, their careers seem almost directly out of a Hollywood script. It's the tale of two athletes overlooked by their in-state colleges who find happiness and fulfillment somewhere else. And, in the end, a measure of revenge is savored by both.

Both native Pennsylvanians, Cowher and Wescoe drew their first starting assignments as a pair against traditionally powerful Penn State, when as freshmen they helped the Pack to a 15-14 upset of the Nittany Lions. As seniors, both put the finishing touches on inspired, if oftimes unsung, four-year stints in State's 30-17 shellacking of Pitt in the Tangerine Bowl.

At the hub of the Wolfpack's 5-2 defensive alignment, it was Cowher and Wescoe along with their battery mates who set the tone of events against Pitt. To both it could have been no other way.

"It was great playing Pitt because for me when I go home I don't have to worry about people making excuses," beamed Cowher. "They're [Pitt followers] always making excuses why they weren't No. 1. We proved to Pitt that we could do what they didn't think we could do. They didn't think much of us and everybody knew it, too."

Wescoe was in total agreement with his playing partner.

"It felt good. I guess it made up for our loss to Penn State, you could say, beating the other top team in Pennsylvania," he noted. "Also, it made it sweeter because they were so cocky. We just went out on the field and didn't say anything to them. We just beat the hell out of them."

"We knew how good we were and we just went out there to show them," added Cowher.

Cowher and Wescoe have been showing opponents that for some time. Neither earned all-America accolades while at State. In fact, neither captured all-ACC honors for that matter. Still, there can be no overlooking their contributions to Wolfpack football.



Bill Cowher shows off game trophy.

Larry Merrell



Kyle Wescoe gives instructions.

Larry Merrell

Earlier in the year, defensive coordinator. Chuck Amato told of how he hoped that their inspired play would start a tradition of getting quality linebackers at State. It was easy to detect the pride he felt for both. Perhaps there were players around the league with more natural talent but few were as intense.

"They've done everything we've asked them to," he praised. "It should be natural to look up to linebackers but if they won't take the bull by the horns the other players won't look up to them."

"Our players look up to them. They don't run 4.7/40's, but they're in on as many tackles as a pair as anyone. They're always on the ball."

"You could see as sophomores they had the chance to be a damn good pair of linebackers and they've done the little things it takes to become that—the little things that some kids wouldn't do," continued Amato, who was a linebacker on State's memorable '67 white-shoe defense.

On the field they've done the things as others wish they could do. For two years this tandem has led the Pack in tackles, with Cowher notching 195 in '78 to Wescoe's 184.

Out of high school some felt that both were too small to be successful in major college football. Somebody forgot the other variables that make a respected linebacker. Cowher and Wescoe cornered the market on these intangibles.

Against Pitt, Cowher gave a hint for the reason behind their success.

"We were just twice as physical as they were. We didn't try to do anything different to stop them. We just played our same game," he said.

For Cowher and Wescoe, members of the Golden Arm Club with nose guard John Stanton, it's a game of punishing opposing runners. In four of Pitt's six first-half possessions, the Panthers were forced to punt after three plays. On the other two occasions, Pitt was able to grind out a total of three first downs, never passing the Wolfpack's 47-yard line. On the field, it is Cowher and Wescoe that call the defensive shots.

"I think they [Pitt] got us more psyched than anything. The whole time we were down there all you read in the papers was Pitt," said Cowher. "If they thought we were in better shape than they were, they're crazy. They can't use that for an excuse. We did the same stuff they did during the week."

"During the game we really didn't talk back to them. We just wanted to show them with the pads and all," chipped in Wescoe.

To each, the after-effects of playing in his last collegiate football game, and perhaps the final game of his career, have yet to be truly felt.

"It felt weird coming off the field for possibly the last time after playing for so many years. I don't know if I'll play again. If I get the chance to play pro, I'll give it a try. Right now it just feels good not to have to do anything. I guess it will feel strange late in the summer if I'm not playing again and everyone is getting ready for another season," said Wescoe.

For Cowher, if he doesn't play again, the Pitt game was the way to cap a career.

"It was great winning it. All you can do now is sit back and wait. It feels good not having anyone telling you what to do for a while. I think about maybe having played my last game, but you can't worry about it. Everything's got to come to an end sometime."

"We had one of the best teams they've ever had here at State this year," continued Cowher. "We wanted the shutout bad (against Pitt), but once you get more than seven points ahead and you've lost the shutout [a third quarter Panther field goal] you really don't care. You still want to kill them but . . ."

Whether they graduate to the professional ranks is still uncertain, but that does not change what Bill Cowher and Kyle Wescoe have meant to Wolfpack football during the past four years. But if the NFL can see beyond awards, they figure to get at chance.

Amato knows full well what that means.

"We'll miss their leadership and their knowledge. They were something else," he said.

"We're going to miss the hell out of them."

Brown caps career with typical results

'We just wanted it more.'

by Denny Jacobs
Sports Editor

Upon entering State's Sports Information Office, visitors do not have to look far before getting the lasting impression that Ted Brown is someone special to the Wolfpack. A legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate, Brown's pictures, likenesses and reams of newspaper copy recounting his many feats on the gridiron quickly catch the eye.

In fact, nearly one-half of an entire wall in the welcoming office is papered with the many tales of this gifted athlete. It's been going on for such a long time now that some of the issues are beginning to yellow around the edges.

In the Pack's 30-17 conquest of Pitt in the Tangerine Bowl, Brown wore No. 23 for the final time in school history. How, it's surely onto the professional ranks for Ted. Sadly, to head coach Bo Rein, it's all over.

After his final game Rein paused then spoke, "There's a little set tear here [pointing to his left eye] because this is the last time to see Ted play for us."

It was Brown's darting running that left more than a tear in the eye of the Pitt faithful, whether they be at home or in Orlando, Fla. You see, Ted finished his career just as he had begun it—with style on the field. Hampered by injuries to himself and the offensive line throughout much of his final campaign, Brown slashed and slithered his way to 126 yards on 28 carries and one touchdown against Pitt, earning the game's Most Valuable Player award.

Few could have expected anything different. Never before had an Atlantic Coast Conference running back accomplished as much, bedazzled so many. In the ACC record books he will go down as the best to have ever lugged a football. Voted first team all-ACC three straight years and rookie of the year in 1975, Brown set new ACC standards for rushing (4,602 yards), scoring (312 points), touchdowns (51) and touchdown responsibility (52).

To Brown, the difference in the Tangerine Bowl game was simple. "We just wanted it more."

"We expected to do the things we had been most successful with all season. We got the most mileage out of the inside counter plays off dive action. The interior line blocking was what enable us to control the ball."

"The layoff since the end of the season helped me," he added. "I was healthy, close to 100 percent."

And when Brown is healthy that spells T-R-O-U-B-L-E for opposing defenses. For some inexplicable reason, he seems to excel against Pennsylvania team. Perhaps it's the challenge involved.

Two years ago, Brown rattled off a remarkable 251-yard performance against defensive-minded Penn State, a record-performance against the Nittany Lions. After the game, Penn State linebacker Rick Donaldson remarked, "Ted Brown is better than Tony Dorsett. He runs harder than Dorsett. I hit him several times but I couldn't take him back."

There was little taking him back against the Panthers, either: The architect of 26 100-yard efforts in 41 college games, the High Point native was somewhat disappointed with his senior campaign before the Tangerine Bowl.

"I couldn't do what I wanted to do," he said. "If I could have I probably would have gained 2,000 yards. This was a combination of a lot of things."

"[My senior year] was really basically the same to me [as other years]. I really don't care what other people think. I've got to satisfy myself first," he continued in reference to the Heisman chase. "I set the highest standards for myself that anyone could set. If I can live up to that, then everything else will fall into place."

There have been many magic moments throughout Brown's senior year, despite his disclaimers to the contrary. Against UNC, he romped for 189 yards and against Syracuse he rambled for 198. In the Pack's 34-7 win over the Tar Heels, Brown became just the sixth runner in NCAA history to eclipse the 4,000 yard mark. At season's end, he finished in fourth place on the all-time NCAA rushing ladder behind Heisman Trophy winners Tony Dorsett and Archie Griffin, and Heisman runnerup Ed Marinaro, and ahead of household names, Earl Campbell, Rickey Bell, Anthony Davis and Mercury Morris.

In all, Brown holds an even dozen Wolfpack records, including a 95-yard touchdown jaunt against Syracuse two years ago.

Brown, who became the second player in State football history to have his jersey retired (Roman Gabriel was the first) has an idea of what a running back's life might be like in the pros.

"I can imagine what the NFL is like because I've taken a pretty good pounding. But there's something inside you that makes you get up and run one more play. It's psychological. You do it for the team," he said.

Off the field there are two sides to the versatile Brown—one that most don't get to see. Around strangers he is quiet, letting someone else take the forefront. But behind the scenes he is altogether different.

"The players' know me. They know when I'm kidding while others who don't know me might take something I say or do the wrong way."

And while he was honored to be considered for the Heisman, Brown thinks the criteria for selection could do with some alteration. It doesn't seem fair to him.

"They should change it somehow to include all college football players," he insisted. "It is supposed to be a trophy for the best football player in college but a defensive player or offensive lineman is never picked. It usually goes to a quarterback or running back. Maybe it could be better to have a Heisman for an offensive player and one for a defensive player. It would be fairer."

Brown, who is less than a year behind in his studies at State, plans to return to graduate. But for now his main objective is to make his mark in the pros. If given his choice he would prefer to play in, ironically enough, Pittsburgh for the Steelers.

"That and maybe Atlanta are the only two cities in the NFL that would be easy for my father to get to watch me play," he said. But it really doesn't make that much difference to me. I feel I can adjust to the situation."

Adjusting is something that Brown learned early in his career at State. As a freshman he sat on the bench until the fifth game of the season, and he admits that



Larry Merrill
Ted Brown was named the Tangerine Bowl MVP.

he got so discouraged that he contemplated quitting football. Fortunately for State, Brown's mother talked him into sticking with it. It was in his fifth game, against Indiana, that Brown gave his first sampling of bigger things to come, rushing for 121 yards on 17 carries and two touchdowns. The rest is history. Unforgettable.

And though he is happy to be moving on, college was an invaluable learning ground for Ted Brown—on and off the field.

"Anyone who has a chance to go to college should take it. It was a great learning experience and it helped me considerably," he said. "I'll be glad to leave, though. Four years of college have been good to me but I see another goal in life I'd like to achieve. If the opportunity comes, I'd like to reach for it [playing professional football]."

"There are times in life you have to say goodbye and I think I'm ready for it," he concluded.

It is possible that Brown is ready to move on to a world where he will get paid for lugging the football and taking the punishment that goes along with it. But it is doubtful that most Wolfpack followers are ready to see him pack his bags. After all, now they'll have to reappear the Sports Information Office wall.

Although the articles may come down with time, the memory of Ted Brown will live in the minds of ACC football fans for a good while to come. Besides, he'll only be a flip of the television dial away.

Ritter swings dead-eye leg, captures offensive award

by Denny Jacobs
Sports Editor

It started out as an afterthought, almost as a favor to an old friend. But it quickly turned into one of State's most productive recruiting decisions in years.

Originally recruited as a "throw-in" two years ago out of High Point Andrews High (the alma mater of Ted Brown, Johnny Evans and Timmy Johnson), Wolfpack place kicker Nathan Ritter wasted no time in making apparent clairvoyants out of his coaches. In State's season opener against East Carolina, Ritter drilled a school record five field goals to help the Pack defeat the Pirates for the first time in three years.

The season ended in much the same manner as it had begun for the diminutive sophomore—with another record. Against Pitt, Ritter struck for a Tangerine Bowl record 51-yard field goal

while hitting three of four attempts. For his night's work, Ritter was named the Offensive Player of the game.

"It's like a dream come true to win the award," said Ritter. "Anybody on offense or defense likes to get awards like that. You want to win the game first but it's something if you get lucky and they single you out of a team effort. It's an honor.

"This game, winning the award, beating Pitt," he thought out loud. "It has to be the biggest thrill of my career."

For Ritter, the nation's most accurate field goal kicker with an amazing 89.5 per cent conversion mark during the regular season, the Tangerine Bowl started untypically—Ritter missed his first attempt.

Ritter was unshaken though. He knew what he'd done wrong. The rest of the game bore that out.

Looking back over the season, Ritter credits his fast start

with a degree of his success. Even before the season he was confident he could fill the void created by the departed Jay Sherrill, who will try out with the Denver Broncos next season after working with the Pack this year.

"I knew I had the accuracy," he said. "It was just a matter of going out there and undoing the pressure. Hitting those five field goals in the first game helped. The confidence is the whole thing. If I don't take for granted making a field goal I usually hit it."

Indeed, Ritter scored 12 points against the Panthers to go along with his team leading and school record setting (for a kicker) 76 points during the regular season. Also, he had hit 17 of 19 attempts going into the Tangerine Bowl, tying the Atlantic Coast Conference mark for most field goals in a season. Not surprisingly, Ritter was among the Pack's six all-ACC



Nathan Ritter struck for three field goals.

Larry Merrill

selections.

After his remarkable rookie season booting the ball for the Wolfpack, Ritter realizes that the pressure will be even greater next year. People will expect even more out of him—if that's possible. It doesn't seem to worry him too much right now.

"Each year is different, each game, each field goal," he

professed. "In football nothing's the same. Each time you go out there it's different.

"You've got to have consistency though," he added. "You can't be good one year and bad the next and expect to get anywhere."

Whatever the case, Ritter is off to a racing start to wherever he's headed.

Stanton plays award-winning role

by Denny Jacobs
Sports Editor

Throughout the season, he toiled in relative obscurity. There were few headlines and little recognition from the average fan. After games, few reporters were apt to crowd around his locker, hounding him for quotes. And, even fewer youngsters would impose on him for

autographs as he left the stadium.

Perhaps that comes with the territory. Lost amongst the action in the trenches, he is not an easy man to spot. To most, he was simply another player doing his job—not that he expected anything more.

Before the Tangerine Bowl, much of the pregame buildup centered around Pitt's defense.

After all, Hugh Green was an all-American as a sophomore and Panther linebackers Al Chesley and Jeff Pelusi were widely recognized as well. Once the game started, all that changed. On the first play of the game, State noseguard John Stanton struck a note that resounded the entire game, sacking Pitt quarterback Rick Trocano.

No longer was he inconspicuous. People quickly began to take note of his name and number. Clearly the Wolfpack defenders had heard enough of the vaunted Panthers. It was a time of action and Stanton showed the way. In the process, he captured the Defensive Player of the Game award for his play.

"All week the press was building up their defense," remembered Stanton. "Usually they don't build up both sides of the team. If it's the defense, we want to prove we're better and if it's the offense we want to shut them down because that's our job."

Stanton and company did both against the 13th ranked Panthers. While Green was grabbing at fist-fulls of air more often than not, the Pack defense put the clamps on Pitt's offensive attack to the extent that Panther head coach Jackie Sherrill is contemplating switching offensive sets next year.

"Our defense had to do a lot of dealing," said the burly 225-pound junior. "On our defense everybody has a job to do and everyone has to do it to make it work.

"At the end of the year our defense started to get noticed," he continued. "Throughout most of the year we weren't. The big thing was that we wanted to do well against a nationally ranked team."

Though neither Stanton nor his defensive mates received

their due recognition during the regular season, the Tangerine Bowl was different. Stanton was the third leading tackler for the Pack behind linebackers Bill Cowher and Kyle Wescoo with 115 tackles. Against Pitt, Stanton added 12 more, including four quarterback sacks.

Defensive coordinator Chuck Amato could not think of a more deserving recipient for the Defensive Player of the Game award.

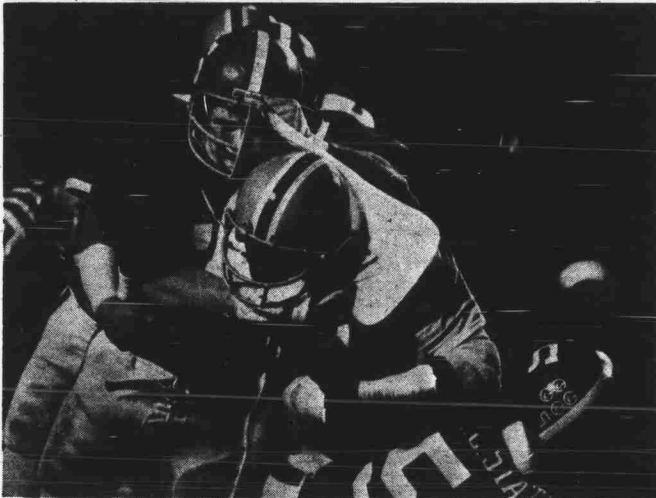
"John's not gotten a lot of good credit like he might have this year. He's played very steady all year," he noted. "I'm just thrilled as hell he got the recognition. He deserved it.

"He plays with heart. He just works like hell to be able to be a part of this football team."

For Stanton, the final game eased the pain of setbacks to Maryland, Clemson and Penn State during the regular season.

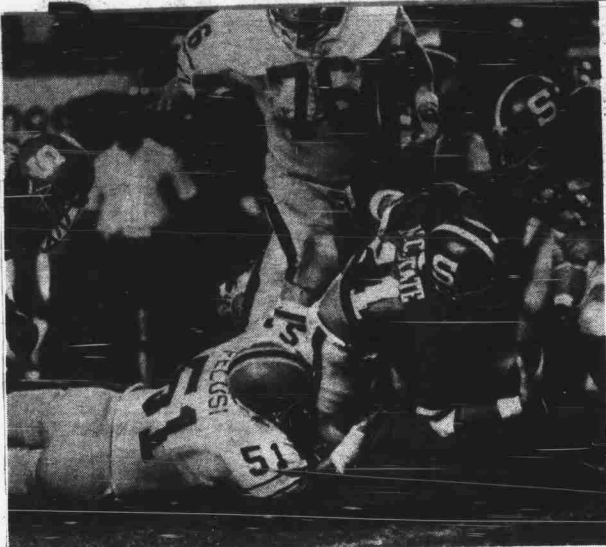
"I'd say it's my most satisfying game. The main thing was they had no respect for us as a team. They thought they were in a higher class. When we beat them the way we did, we left no doubt about who was the better team.

"I'm just glad to win because when we got down there they were so cocky. We just got ready for this game," he added. "We hadn't beaten a ranked team all year and we wanted to gain some respect. Naturally we were psyched. We shut them down most of the night. We were just trying to show what we can do. I think we did that."

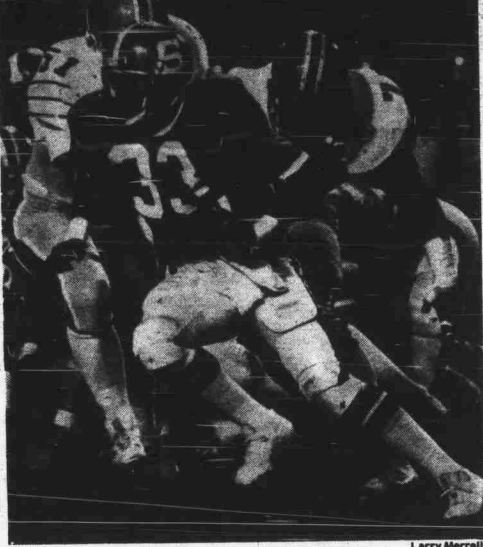


John Stanton manhandles Ray Jones.

Chris Seward



Scott Smith stretches for extra yardage.



Billy Ray Vickers breaks past Pitt defenders.

Larry Merrell

Gillespie, Hitt adapt readily

by Denny Jacobs
Sports Editor

Adaptability.

An essential ingredient to success whatever the field of endeavor. And, when it comes to football, there can be no substitute. Natural talent, desire, dedication and all the other qualities that make up a complete player mean little without it.

For two Wolfpack seniors, State's 30-17 Tangerine Bowl triumph over Pitt was especially satisfying. It was the crowning touch on careers that were marked by adapting to varied obstacles. The times of frustration and uncertainty now past, Tim Gillespie and Frank Hitt who manned the right side of the offensive line savored the thrill of victory in a special way.

"Being a senior, I set a goal the week before the Pitt game to really sell out," said Gillespie who played right guard. "The guys on the team really wanted to dedicate the game to the last time we would play together."

"The Tangerine Bowl gave me a chance to end up on a good note," allowed Hitt. "It was a good way to end things. I wanted to beat them because I thought they were overrated and it would give us an opportunity to finish in the Top 20."

"They didn't respect us much," he added. "They didn't have a whole lot of class."

Members of an offensive line that many felt, when it was healthy, was the finest in the Atlantic Coast Conference, both Gillespie and Hitt had to endure injuries that limited their capabilities during the regular season. While Gillespie missed just a little more than one game, Hitt was forced to the sidelines for much of the season after getting hurt in the West Virginia game.

Called by head coach Bo Rein "the ideal college football lineman," Hitt never got used to the idea of watching his teammates play without him.

"It was frustrating. We won a lot of games and all but I never could accept not playing. When you're not playing you really don't feel like a part of the team. I was starting to play better then I got hurt. I never could get used to it."

against the Panthers, Gillespie and Hitt, along with all-America center Jim Ritcher and left tackle and guard Chris Dieterich and Chuck Stone, successfully opened the Pitt defense allowing Ted Brown and Billy Ray Vickers to pick up valuable yardage on the ground.

"We wanted to win some respect. We knew they

were a great football team but I don't know if they were as good as they thought they were sometimes," said Gillespie.

"I felt if we could jump on them early we could get them. It really worked about like we wanted it to."

"I think that not only they were stunned but we were stunned in the beginning of the game when we took the early lead. Then we got back to work and put together two long drives in the second half to put them away," continued Gillespie. "It kind of exemplifies our season. We've played our best games doing that."

"I think we controlled the line of scrimmage most of the game," added Hitt. "I felt like we had to do that to control the ball, to win."

Both defensive linemen when they came to State as was Ritcher, Gillespie and Hitt were switched to the offensive line two years ago. Offensive line coach Jon Mirlovich obviously liked what he saw. And Hitt credits the coach with a great deal of the unit's success.

"Nobody realizes how much time the line puts in," said Hitt. "We met two or three times a week at 6:45 and we went out to practice an hour before everyone else. Looking back on it, it was worth the time we put in."

"One of the biggest reasons for our success was coach Mirlovich. He's a pretty hard-nosed guy and he made us work harder than we thought we could. I think if we could have stayed healthy this year, we would have won one or two more games."

"Also, Ted has a tendency to make you look better than you are. He reads the blocks really well and gives us a little extra incentive," he noted.

Ritcher, who is called by some the best college center in the game is quick to point to the on and off the field contributions of Hitt and Gillespie as added incentive for him and the rest of the offensive line. His personality and all he just became the leader. And even when Frank was off the field he motivated you," praised Ritcher. "Both of them had great senior leadership."

"It helps me become more of a leader too. When you see someone else putting out to help the team, it motivates you to do the same thing."

An honor student and class president at Greensboro's Smith High, Gillespie knowingly changed his attitude towards football when he came to State.

"When I came to State, I decided to give more of myself to football," he said. "It was a decision I had to make. I'm not saying that college is just a training ground for pro football but I chose my own road."

"I feel you sacrifice many things for football—friends, living experiences—but I don't think many people could work harder. If anything I learned from our 3-7-1 season (Rein's first season as head coach) is that no matter how hard you work there are no promises you'll be successful. I think that losing season helped me see the big-time football thing differently—that it's not a god."

"I can't give my life to it. But football seems more important when you're winning."

The 1978 season was the second in Hitt's career that he was plagued with injuries. As a sophomore, he was forced to red-shirt a year. Still, he has no complaints.

"I was here for five years and went to four bowl games," he recalled with a smile. "That's kind of hard to beat anywhere else. My only regret is that we didn't win an ACC championship. We came close but we couldn't quite get it."

With their college careers ended, both Gillespie and Hitt look forward to earning a spot on a professional team. Gillespie displayed his versatility in the Senior Bowl switching to center and doing a creditable job.

"I want to give the pros a shot," said Gillespie. "That's been my goal and I want to see what I can do up there."

For Hitt, it's more a question of how the pro scouts will interpret his knee injury more than anything else. He too wants a crack at the likes of Joe Green and Ed "Too Tall" Jones.

"I hope I can sign on somewhere and get an opportunity to play pro ball," he said. "Otherwise, I haven't thought about doing anything else very much. I'll just have to wait and see what happens."

And, while both have benefitted from their college experience, they are glad to be moving on.

"I'm going to miss it but I'm really glad the season's over," admitted Gillespie. "I'm going to miss N.C. State but tonight (Tangerine Bowl) was such a great team effort it's a good way to leave."

"It's behind me now," said Hitt. "I feel like I got off to a good start this year and then messed up in the middle but finished strong. I just wish I could have gotten the chance to play more this year."

Tough State returns a healthy chunk of its front force in Ritcher, Dieterich, Stone and Chris Koehne who filled in for the injured Hitt, doubtless it will take the Pack some time to adapt.



Bill Cowher



Tim Gillespie



John Foy



Kyle Wescoe



Jon Hall



Ted Brown



Tom Fabiny



Tony Knox



Buster Ray



Mike Kraemer



Randy Hall



Mike Owens

Tangerine Bowl: untapped gold mine ?

For State's football team, the Tangerine Bowl offered a gold mine of opportunities. It was an opportunity to enjoy a week of fun and "relaxation" in temperate Orlando, Fla. It was a chance to meet a nationally ranked team. It was a chance to perform on television for the third time this season.

But most importantly to the majority of the players, it was a chance to send the seniors out on a high note. There would be no Atlantic Coast Conference championship to remember but somehow it didn't seem to matter as much after the Tangerine Bowl victory. It was a special game.

It's hard to figure why the Tangerine Bowl has not made more of an impact on the sports front. It has plenty of pluses in its favor. To start with, it would be hard to imagine many locations with as much for visitors to do than Orlando. There's Sea World, Disney World, Circus World and about any other world you could imagine.

The weather was most comfortable throughout the week, affording all the chance to enjoy the outdoors. And for North Carolinians, there was liquor-by-the-drink to take the edge off a tiring day. A pleasant change of pace.

Obviously one of the drawbacks is its television coverage provided courtesy of the Mizlou Company. It seems sad to note that, throughout the game, Mizlou's announcers were off the mark seemingly as much as they were on it.

Not only was State called the University of North Carolina State and also South Carolina State but there were times during the broadcast the players names were misrepresented. Fortunately, Mizlou's infamous isolate, where the edge of the screen goes dark, is no longer one of its feature.

The date was also a drawback from drawing a bigger crowd as there were many who might have made the trip were the game not on Dec. 23. Perhaps in time these shortcomings will be ironed out. The potential definitely appears to be there.

Certainly, it will be a trip long remembered by the Wolfpack seniors.

— Denny Jacobs



Russell Matt



Frank Hitt

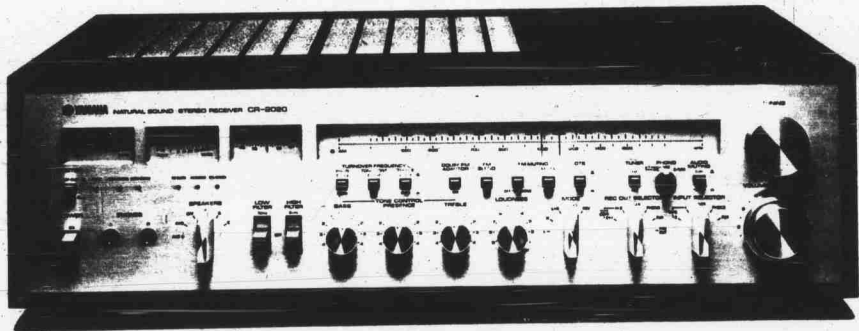
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