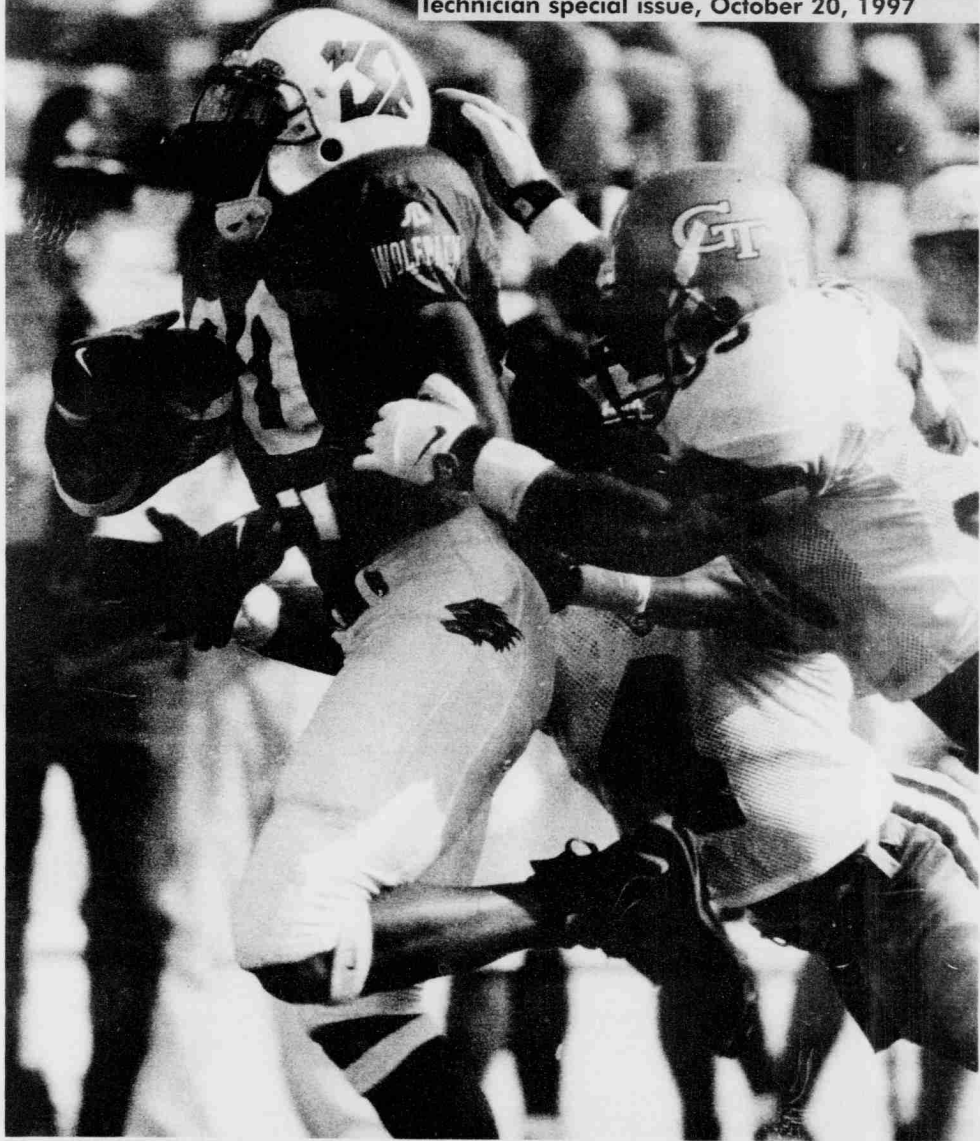


1997 Midseason Review

Technician special issue, October 20, 1997



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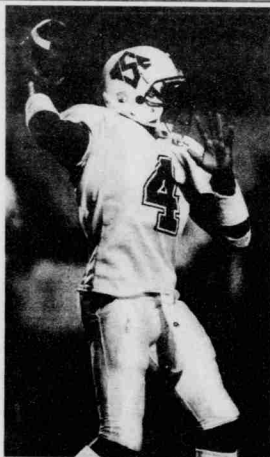
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Action: Dave Torkay/Star



Fullback Carlos King
Action: W.W. Gray/Star



Defensive tackle George Williams
Action: Dave Torkay/Star

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February 1, 1920

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How to Reach Us

Internet Services:

TOL: Technician OnLine
www.sma.ncstate.edu/Technician

Campus Forum:
techforum@ncsu.edu

Press Releases:
techpress@ncsu.edu

Information:
technfo@ncsu.edu

Phone Numbers:

Editorial 515-2411
Advertising 515-2029
Fax 515-6133

Address

323 Witherspoon Student Center
Box 8608, NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-8608

Tabloid Editor: James Curle,
Assistant Sports Editor

Football 1997: the season in review

■ A blow-by-blow, game-by-game review of the season so far.

JAMES CURTIS
Assistant Sports Editor

August 30, 1997: Syracuse

NCSU	32
Syracuse	31

The Wolfpack started off the season with a bang against the then-13th-ranked Syracuse Orangemen. Few people in the country gave the Pack any chance of pulling off the upset up North, considering that going into the game quarterback Donovan McNabb was a preseason Heisman candidate and that a week earlier they had completely destroyed Wisconsin.

But Mike O'Coin had the strength of the rubber band on his side, and the unity that those hands symbolized materialized in the form of the first big upset of the NCAA football season, a 32-21 overtime victory.

Things started shaky for the Pack, as McNabb connected with Quinton Spotwood on the very first play of the game for a 68-yard touchdown pass. At the end of the first quarter, Syracuse had a 14-0 lead and it appeared that Syracuse was on the way to its second decisive victory in as many weeks.

But Jaime Barnette was not to be denied.

Following a Chris Hensler field goal, Barnette connected with junior Torrey Holt for a 37-yard touchdown strike and the Pack's first TD of the season.

After trading scores throughout the rest of the game, State and Syracuse found themselves tied at the end of regulation 24-24, and about to play the first overtime period in the history of the ACC.

After McNabb connected for a 18-yard touchdown pass to put the Orangemen on top, it was the Pack's turn to either win it or lose it. Barnette, after the Pack was forced into a tough fourth-and-seven situation, scrambled for 10 yards to keep State alive. Tremayne Stephens punched in a score from one yard out several plays later and State was down by one.

O'Coin shocked the entire OrangeDome when he decided to go for the two-point conversion instead of playing it safe and kicking the extra point. Syracuse obviously didn't expect it, as the entire bench screamed to its players on the field to call time out, but no one saw and the ball was

snapped. Barnette went through his reads, found Holt open at the goalline and placed a perfect pass into his hands for the two points and the win.

The upset captured the attention of the press across the country, and the Pack looked like it was on the road to finally digging out of the bottom-half of the ACC standings.

September 6: Duke

NCSU	45
Duke	14

Basking in the glow of the national attention, O'Coin headed into his team's matchup against conference rival Duke very cautiously, for he knew that if the Pack didn't have the right mindset, team members could find themselves falling victims to an upset just as easily as Syracuse did a week before.

O'Coin needn't have worried, however. State made short work of Fred Goldsmith's young football team on Duke's home field, where the stands were ironically filled with Wolfpack fans in their red and white.

Duke played tough for the first quarter, matching State's first score with a touchdown of its own. The first period ended in a 7-all tie, and it appeared that Duke wasn't just going to curl up and die right away.

The Blue Devils decided to save that for the second quarter.

State simply pounded the Blue Devils into the ground as three of the Pack's running backs each scored a touchdown in the period. Both Carlos King and Stephens punched in scores, but the big news was sophomore tailback Rashon Spikes scoring the first touchdown of his young college career.

The Pack posted 21 unanswered points in the second quarter, and put the game out of reach at that point.

Both Stephens and Spikes would find the endzone again, and placekicker Chris Hensler added insult to injury by scoring the final points of the game on a 32-yard field goal, leaving the score at 45-14.

Duke's only points of the game came from two scrambles from quarterback Bobby Campbell.

The press was now buzzing about the upstart Wolfpack, that in a brief span of two weeks had notched two convincing wins.

Days of Raleigh was jumping as the Pack headed home for its home opener against the ranked Clemson Tigers.

September 13: Clemson

NCSU	17
Clemson	19

Carter-Finley was rocking that Saturday afternoon in anticipation of a Textile Bowl showdown between two of the hottest teams in the country.

The Pack seemed unstoppable, and Clemson was playing its normal hardnose football, so it seemed only fitting that neither team really seemed to have the upper hand through the game.

State struck first, on a five-yard touchdown run from Tremayne Stephens. Clemson lay dormant throughout the rest of the first quarter and State watched the opening period wind down owning a 7-0 lead.

State played the part of opposum, however, for the remainder, as Clemson was the only team to score for the remainder of the half. The Tigers, though not dominant nor running up the scoreboard, nevertheless put the first points on the board in the form of a 25-yard Mike Padgett field goal.

That trademark Clemson defense came up big in the third, as Rahim Abdullah returned a fumble 74 yards for the go-ahead score.

The Pack responded in the fourth in the form of a Hensler field goal and a Barnette-to-Holt touchdown play, but the Tigers' Padgett owned the rest of the game. He kicked three field goals over the course of the period, including the game-clinching one with 19 seconds remaining in the ball game.

So the score ended on the Pack losing a tough one at home, 19-17. But spirits were still up, considering the Tigers were ranked higher than the Pack and it was such a close game. That, and the next matchup against Northern Illinois, quite frankly, wasn't expected to be much of a game.

September 20: Northern Illinois

NCSU	41
No. Illinois	14

The Huskies of Northern Illinois University entered the game ranked 112th out of 112 teams in the Division I-A league. In other words, they were the worst team in the country.

Coach O'Coin's biggest fear going into the game was whether the Pack would have the ability to play tough against a team that everybody expected them to beat. For the most part, the Pack

members did play like people were expecting them to. But when you come off a close loss to a team ranked in the top 20 nationally and then play the worst team in the country, "Utter Domination" should be mentioned along with the win instead of "An Adequate Job."

Nevertheless, the Pack did win, and by a fairly large margin, 41-14. State shut down the Huskies during the first quarter through the air, as NIU had zero yards of passing on a 0-5 performance at quarterback. By contrast, Barnette had already amassed 121 yards on a perfect 7-7 completion rate. If it weren't for tailback Ivory Bryant's 34 yards on the ground, Northern Illinois wouldn't have had any offense at all.

State scored twice during the opening period, and looked like it was on the way to a shutout.

But quarterback Frismon Jackson and the Huskies were determined to put points on the board, and it happened with a little more than two minutes left in the first half. Jackson found Deon Mitchell in the endzone for NIU's first score of the game.

After Stephens had hit pay dirt twice, O'Coin opted to put in Spikes again at tailback. Spikes didn't disappoint the crowd of more than 50,000, either. In the fourth quarter, the sophomore tailback erupted for a 46-yard touchdown run, his second of the game. It still stands as the longest touchdown run this season for the Pack.

Spikes finished the game with a total of 91 yards, second only to Stephens' 93.

By the end of the game, nearly everyone on the field in Wolfpack red was a second- or third-string player. The game was well before that time arrived, however, and State began to revel in its third victory of the young season, already equaling the total of each of the past two years.

Still, many fans began to wonder why State hadn't blown NIU off the field that night, and doubts — not many, but a few — began to circle around the once-invincible Pack.

September 25: Wake Forest

NCSU	18
WFU	19

Following a short week, the Pack faced off against a much-stronger Wake Forest team than had been fielded in the past. Jim Caldwell, in his fourth year with the Demon Deacons, built his team around the impressive arm of Brian Kuklick. The two quar-

terbacks matched up very closely, as proven by the meager 3-0 lead the Deacs held after the first period.

State charged back in the second quarter, however, as Holt reeled in the only passing touchdown of the evening for the Pack. Followed up by a Hensler field goal, State headed to the locker room at halftime in command of a 10-3 lead.

But Wake quietly worked its way back into the game in the second half. Despite committing five turnovers during the course of the game, the Pack couldn't put the Deacs away. Wake Forest scored nine unanswered points in the fourth quarter, including three from a Mike Burdick field goal with only 48 seconds left in regulation.

The Pack was unable to get within Hensler's range on the ensuing drive, and when his field goal attempt in the closing seconds fell short, Wake Forest found itself the victor of a 19-18 home win.

This was the second heart-breaking loss this season for O'Coin and his troops, and the second to be lost on a last-minute field goal.

The Pack would have nearly a week and a half until the game against Georgia Tech, and Pack fans would have to wait just as long to see if their hopes of a bowl bid this season would have to be postponed yet another year.

October 11: Georgia Tech

NCSU	17
Tech	27

The matchup against the Yellow Jackets two weeks ago would be the second big test for the Pack in as many games.

Perhaps the biggest test was Georgia Tech quarterback Joe Hamilton. He was a lethal weapon as both a passer and a runner, airing out for 293 yards of passing and rushing for another 71, including an 18-yard touchdown scramble. His 364 yards of total offense was 30 yards more than State's total output.

But State was far from out of it throughout the game. The Pack carried a 10-7 lead into halftime and matched the Yellow Jackets' lone score of the third quarter with a touchdown of its own.

George O'Leary's squad began to pull away, however, in the fourth quarter, scoring three times to the Pack's none.

The game ended with Georgia Tech owning a 10-point victory, 27-17, and sent the Pack back to

Barnette leads Pack

■ Jaime Barnette enters his first full season starting at quarterback.

JAMES HOPE
Staff Writer

Last year, against Alabama, N.C. State head coach Mike O'Cain featured a red-shirt freshman quarterback for the first time. Ever since that game, Jaime Barnette has been taking snaps for the Wolfpack offense.

Barnette and the Wolfpack came into preseason camp coming off of back to back 3-8 seasons.

But instead of dreading the upcoming season, Barnette said that the team focused on setting the tone for a good season.

He mentioned that the coaching staff worked on getting the team to where they are supposed to be mentally and physically.

"We've grown tremendously as far as mentally and physically," Barnette said. "Everybody's bet-

ter prepared." Barnette also added that the team has executed better as a whole.

Backing up Barnette in the passing department are two red-shirt freshmen. Both Charles Berry (6-3, 188 lb.) and Grant Dorn (6-3, 186 lb.) challenged Barnette for the quarterback position during spring drills. Berry is perhaps the better quarterback of the two, whereas Dorn has the ability to share punting duties with Jason Biggs if need be.

But without a doubt, Barnette is the starting quarterback, strictly from an execution standpoint.

Execution is one thing Barnette has done well.

So far this year he has connected 105 out of 186 pass attempts for 1427 yards. He has seven touchdown passes, five of which were thrown to Torry Holt.

He only has five interceptions on the year.

Execution is not the only thing the Pack worked on in preseason. The emotional aspect of things has been taken off.



Jaime Barnette enters his second season as State's quarterback. He won the starting job last season in the Alabama game and has started every game since for the Pack.

ANDREW DAVIS/TUCKER/STAFF

Barnette said that the team is spending more time off the field together.

"I feel that the team is more close this year than in past years," Barnette said. "We like to

do more things together."

Barnette also believes that State has made a lot of progress on their bye week.

"We saw a lot of work done as far as running plays."

He also mentioned that the team was helped greatly by being able to go home and see family and friends.

"We all saw people that we had lost touch with and needed to speak with."

Although close losses have hampered the Wolfpack after a fast 2-0, the thought of a possible bowl game remains foremost in the team members' minds. But a tough schedule awaits State. Barnette's thoughts on a possible postseason appearance by the pack are clear.


"I have no doubt in my mind that State has a good shot at a bowl."

That good shot, however, would be helped out greatly by an upset against Florida State.

Barnette's totals so far this season:

at Syracuse:
18-29, 1 int., 279 yards
at Duke:
15-19, 0 int., 224 yards
Clemson:
14-28, 0 int., 204 yards
Northern Illinois:
16-25, 3 int., 233 yards
at Wake Forest:
21-34, 1 int., 209 yards
at Georgia Tech:
13-28, 1 int., 135 yards
North Carolina:
8-23, 1 int., 143 yards


Totals:
105-186, 1427 yards,
7 ints., 8 touchdowns.



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The last dance for Mark Thomas

■ Senior Mark Thomas heads a cast of talented tight ends for the Pack.

TIM HUNTER
Staff Writer

Just don't call him selfish. Senior star Mark Thomas knows what it takes to be a winner, on and off the field.

The 6-5, 236 lb. Thomas has started every game since his sophomore year, and comes into the 1997 season as a legitimate All-ACC candidate.

Thomas is having a banner year at tight end, posting several personal bests already. He started the '97 season off with a bang, catching all seven passes thrown his

way in State's season-opening upset of Syracuse.

As a senior, Thomas has been through many ups and downs, and understands that "the mindset of a champion involves putting the losses and mistakes behind you." It is this type of leadership that has given the Wolfpack reasonable success in the early going.

"I consider myself a leader on the field," Thomas said.

As a junior, Thomas improved by leaps and bounds, having his best game against UNC, in which he caught four passes for 66 yards, a career high. Thomas was presented the Most Improved award at the season's end, and also was the recipient of the Bob Warren Award, given to the play-

er who displays integrity and leadership.

Despite his considerable individual awards, Thomas understands that teams win games together, as a unit.

"It's a team game. Coach O'Caïn stresses that," Thomas said. "When one guy isn't doing well, it's up to the rest of us to pick him up, on and off the field."

Though Thomas is clearly the most experienced tight end on the team, he was challenged for his starting role in spring practice. 6-5, 245 lb. Michael Foushee and 6-5, 245 lb. Devon Smith give the Pack three players that would start for most teams in the ACC.

Foushee, a redshirt junior, saw limited action last year in all 11 games. Originally joining the

team as a walk-on, Foushee has developed into a solid blocker.

Smith, a junior as well, has shown he can do it on both sides of the ball, having played defensive end all of the '96 season.

"Mark and Devon are as athletic a pair as we've had," proclaims Brain Simmons, assistant coach.

All three saw considerable action in the Syracuse game, as well as the Northern Illinois game.

As Foushee battled injuries last season, Thomas was forced to play almost every down, and is benefiting from the extra rest the duo can give him.

Winning, not individual accomplishments, is the most important thing for Thomas, however.

"If I don't get a lot of catches,

that's fine, as long as we win. That's the mindset we have as a team."

Thomas entered the Georgia Tech game two weeks ago with 138 yards on 14 receptions, good enough for 10th overall in the ACC.

"We know we can win, we know we can be successful," Thomas said, visibly confident even after the tough losses so far. "The team is like a family, we're all riding in the same boat."

"We either sink or swim together."

So far, Thomas and the Pack are doing just that. With his kind of leadership and unselfishness, State can reach its goal: finishing at 1-0 after each week.

Torry Holt: Playmaker

■ Jaime Barnette has quite a few talented targets to throw to this season.

TIM HUNTER
Staff Writer

Midway through the 1997 season, N.C. State receivers have continued the proud tradition of Wolfpack wideouts.

Opposing defenses always have a tough question on their minds when preparing for the Pack...who to focus on?

The receiving corps is as talented as ever here at NCSU, and that is quite a statement. The group includes All-ACC candidate Tory Holt, big-play sophomore Chris Coleman, surprising freshman Eric Leak, not to mention the fastest man in the ACC, senior Alvis Whitted.

Holt heads up the group, a true star in the league as a junior. Holt has more than fully recovered from a broken collarbone sustained against UNC-Chapel Hill last season.

The 6-2, 186 flanker was first in the ACC with 481 receiving yards going into the Georgia Tech game, on 23 catches. The 23 grabs were good enough for third

in the league, with an average of 18.7 yards per catch.

"Holt is one of our best weapons on offense," Coleman said.

Holt hauled in 24 catches in seven games last year before succumbing to the aforementioned injury late in the season.

"He's a special guy," offensive coordinator Jimmy Kiser said. "He can do it all, and he's a real good runner."

Holt is also golden in the red zone, with six touchdown catches this season. If Holt keeps up his current pace, he will break Eddie Goines' single season record of 11 touchdown catches.

Lining up on one side of Holt is sophomore Chris Coleman. The

6-2, 200-pounder shone brightly after Holt went down last year. Coleman's first collegiate touchdown catch was on.

Senior Alvis Whitted, staff legends are made of.

On teammate Alvis Whitted pulled down a 72-yard pass against No. 8 Alabama in front of the home crowd at Carter-Finley stadium.

Coleman is a great blocker, and sees himself as a "dependable, big play receiver." Coleman went on to say that, "I have been in the



Torry Holt reels in a pass for tough yardage against the Yellow Jackets. The junior has made quite a name for himself, considered to be the next big receiver for the Pack.

shadows as far as catching passes," which is not hard among this talented group.

Going into the Georgia Tech game, Coleman had pulled down eight receptions for 132 yards. The Shelby, N.C., native also has seen time on special teams, collecting eight tackles and returning a punt for 37 yards last season.

Senior Alvis Whitted has the undisputed claim as the "Fastest Man in the ACC." Whitted finished sixth in the 200 meter dash in the 1996 Olympic trials, and knows how to use his speed on the field.

Whitted has shown considerable progress every year, and had a breakout game in the Wake Forest loss, pulling down a

career-high four catches for 58 yards.

"Alvis can outrun any defensive back in the ACC," Coleman said. Whitted also assists the Pack on special teams as their star kickoff return man.

A big question for the coaches going in to the '97 season was concerning who was going to fill the fourth spot in the rotation. Freshman Eric Leak has stepped up and filled this role quite well. Leak is averaging 10.0 yards per catch on six catches. Leak is improving game by game, and saw considerable action in the loss to Clemson.

The 5-8 flanker moved up in the depth chart after a spectacular spring practice.

"He's a quick, elusive runner

who could really add some things to our offense," Kiser said.

Sophomore Quentin Neals has also seen action, catching one pass for 10 yards.

This four-man rotation is one of the best ever at NCSU, and gives quarterback Jaime Barnette some great targets on the field.

"Our versatility is our best threat," Coleman said.

Continuing the unselfishness of this year's squad, the guys don't care who the star is.

"If we have to throw to Tory all day, or all four of us plus the tight end, that's fine if it's what it takes to win," Coleman said.

Look for Holt and this group to set some new standards before the season is over.

Seamus Murphy anchors the O-Line

■ The Pack's front five look to give Jaime Barmette all the time he needs.

K. GAFFNEY
Sports Editor

The overlooked and under-appreciated.

That is one of the best ways to describe the offensive line of any football team. These are the guys who do their jobs day in and day out, rarely seeing any press, but at the same time, if they are hav-

ing a bad day, it can mean disaster for the scoring chance of that team.

Under Robbie Caldwell, assistant head coach, this year's line is one of the Pack's most talented and thick in the past few years.

For the 1997 season, the Wolfpack line is anchored by seniors Lonnie Gilbert and Seamus Murphy, and the talent that lines up in front of State's field general runs deep.

At tackle are Ian Rafferty and Todd Boyle.

Rafferty is a returning starter

from the 1996 season with a year-and-a-half of experience already under his belt. Rafferty is looked at as one of the leaders on the line.

Boyle is the Pack's No. 1 choice at right tackle, sharing time with fellow red-shirt sophomore John Fletcher, while Rafferty is backed up by red-shirt freshman Jarvis Borum, who sat out last season with a foot injury.

Gilbert is State's top pick in the guard spot on the right side.

Gilbert, a 6-3, 287 lb. guard from Miami, Fla., was a second

team All-ACC selection last season.

Alex Santos owns the guard spot on the left side. Standing at 6-3, 306 of Orlando, Fla., Santos brings 316 pounds of toughness up to the front line.

Six-foot-five red-shirt freshman Alex Rice backs up Gilbert, while 6-5 Ryan Knudston is second on the depth chart behind Santos.

Murphy completes the top-of-state lineup for the Pack.

Returning for his fourth year, the 6-5 senior from Pittsburgh,

Pa. started every game last season for the Pack, and has been one of State's most consistent performers.

Of these five, Rafferty, Gilbert, Santos, and Murphy started all 11 games last season.

Boyle replaced 1996 senior Tom Dombalis, and has shown to be tougher than ever in the 1997 season.

Backing up the group are a solid core of freshman and sophomores, ready to step in the next time that Jamie Barmette needs protection in the pocket.

Running backs with a mission

■ Meet the "other" men in the backfield for the Wolfpack.

JAMES CURLE
Assistant Sports Editor

With stars like Tremayne Stephens and Carlos King heading the list of names on the backfield roster for the Wolfpack, it's easy to forget that State even has other running backs dressed at the game.

Those backs in question would like to change that as soon as possible.

Equal to the task at the tailback position is Rahshon Spikes. A sophomore from Meridan, Conn., Spikes has steadily increased in playing ability during his two-year tenure at State.

He proved his skill at the position during the Northern Illinois game. Running in place of Stephens, Spikes broke open the game on a 46-yard touchdown run during the third quarter, the longest touchdown run of the season. He finished that game with 91 yards and opened the eyes of many of the Wolfpack faithful.

Also gunning for playing time at tailback are juniors Theo Chavis and Cordell Smith. Chavis (5-8, 176) and Smith (6-1, 194) are both members of State's track team.

There is just as much depth backing up Carlos King at the fullback position.

Sophomore Kevin Hubbard is King's primary backup, but junior Jeff Butler is right there

with him. Junior Joe Johnson rounds out the fullback roster.

Hubbard, at 6-0, 260 pounds, is one of the largest fullbacks in the league, and provides extra strength up the middle when the running gets tough.

He's a full 30 pounds heavier than both King and Butler. Hubbard saw playing time in 11 games last season, running the ball five times for 38 yards.

The biggest carry of his career came against the Blue Devils last year. He scored a 20-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter to put the game out of reach.

Hubbard saw limited playing time against Georgia Tech, and is only expected to play when the services of King are unavailable.

Butler, also a member of the Wolfpack baseball team, saw action in all 11 games both last year and the season before. He had six carries for 19 yards in 1995, with only one carry for five yards last season.

Johnson spent the spring recovering from surgery to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), and will see most of his action on special teams this season. He played in eight games last season, used primarily in blocking situations and on special teams.

Many of these reserves have the ability to start at many other Division I-A schools. Combined with the elusive Stephens and hard-charging King, they form one of the most talented and dangerous backfields in the ACC.



Sophomore tailback Rahshon Spikes runs for tough yardage against Duke.

ARNEW DAVIS/TUCKER/STAP

Stephens and King: One last chance

■ Senior running backs Tremayne Stephens and Carlos King are giving it their all in their final seasons with the Pack.

JAMES CURLE
Assistant Sports Editor

Imagine only having four years to live.

How would you live it? One 110 percent, right?

Well, that's not an unfair comparison of the career of a football player. He has only four years in which to do all that can be done at his position, and hopefully enjoy a good deal of success along the way.

Trying to accomplish so much in such a relatively short span of time means lots of hard work, enjoying the victories as they come and learning as much as you can from the mistakes as they happen.

Both Tremayne Stephens and Carlos King are prime examples of players living their four years to the hilt, but from two different angles.

Tremayne Stephens

Not too much more can be said

about the storied career of Stephens' that hasn't already been discussed at great length.

He sprung onto the ACC scene with about as brazen an entrance as one could make, rushing for 189 yards in his very first game against Wake Forest. He continued to rack up 100-yard games throughout the season (four, in fact) and shot his way through the record books for total rushing yardage. He also earned second-team All-ACC honors for his work during his first year in the league.

His second season came with great expectations heaped upon his shoulders, from those hoping he would repeat the same kind of success he enjoyed the year before.

But Stephens didn't have the ally of anonymity on his size his sophomore season, and consequently the defenses around the league were keying in on him from play one. His per-carry average dropped nearly two yards, and despite the fact that he carried the ball 60 more times than he did in 1994, he had two fewer 100-yard games.

Most players would get discour-

aged going from such a stellar season straight into a frustratingly mediocre one. But Stephens kept plugging away, working harder than ever in practice and not dwelling on what could have been.

His junior season saw a mild improvement from his sophomore campaign. He touched the ball fewer times than he had a season before, but his per-carry average rose a bit and he notched four more 100-yard games, all the while scoring five touchdowns for the second year in a row.

But more importantly, Stephens accomplished these feats behind an untested quarterback, and his solidarity at the tailback position held the team together through another rough 3-8 season.

Stephens entered this season seventh on the Pack's list of all-time rushing leaders, and some of the weight he felt on his shoulders in 1995 was translated into the form of a push from tailback Rahshon Spikes.

The sophomore had a tremendous spring practice and it was all Stephens could do to stay in front of him to avoid relinquishing the

starting job. The push provided by Spikes was just the thing needed to spur Stephens on to success once again on the gridiron. He has already put together two 100-yard games this first half of the season, with only three in game in which he's rushed below 90 yards.

Stephens will more than likely finish this season third in the Wolfpack rankings in career yardage, third or fourth in career touchdowns and in the mid-teens for career yardage in the ACC standings. Pretty heady stuff for just four years of work.

Stephens has to be proud of what he has accomplished, for most players rarely get to enjoy that type of success as consistently as Stephens has during their careers.

Carlos King

While Stephens spent nearly every game of his collegiate career under the scrutiny of the public eye, King's career has been one more of patience than performance.

King came to N.C. State from Hargrave Military Academy riding the fence between a large tailback and a small fullback. His



ALBERT WHANGU/STAFF

Carlos King has made the most of his newfound starting job this season.

lack of size at the fullback position contributed partially to his not starting his freshman year, but the major factor preventing his playing time came clad in #35.

Rod Brown entered the 1993 season as a true freshman, and saw playing time at fullback in nine of the games that season for the Pack.

At 6-0, 243-lb., Brown easily fit into the role of fullback and the blocking duties that came with it.

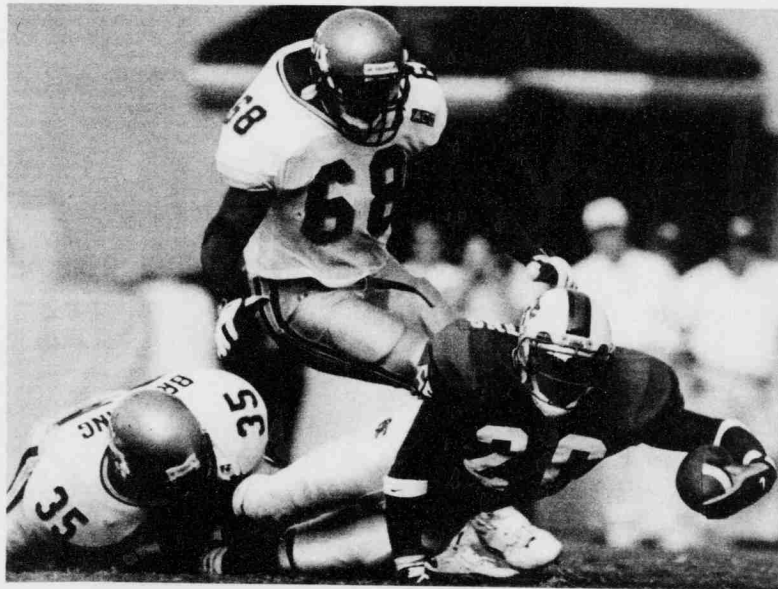
As the years progressed, Brown earned more and more respect for his ability to play the fullback position and saw his playing time increase from a backup role to dedicated starter.

And all the while, King could only watch from the sidelines game in and game out, hoping for scattered playing time here and there.

Last season, however, as Brown was winding down his career, King saw increased action. His big game of the season came against Duke, when he ran for 89 yards (including one 62-yard rush) and caught two passes for 68 yards. Both totals surpassed his previous career highs. He also scored two touchdowns that day, adding further credence to his ability to play a position that traditionally has been held by larger players.

He entered this season completely out of the shadow of Brown, and has performed as well as anyone — fan, coach or otherwise — could have hoped for.

In the tough loss against Georgia Tech two weeks ago, King showcased his explosive ability, turning out a 74-yard



ALBERT WHANGU/STAFF

Tremayne Stephens goes the extra mile against Georgia Tech. He rushed for 105 yards against the Yellow Jackets that day.

Bringing the rush to quarterbacks

■ The D-line for the Pack hopes to make opposing quarterbacks pay.

RYAN KELLOGG
Staff Writer

The Wolfpack defense this season hopes a combination of experience and determination will help improve on last season's disappointing performance. This new initiative is no better represented than by the warriors in the trenches — the defensive line.

"I felt personally that after a lot of games (last year), it was the

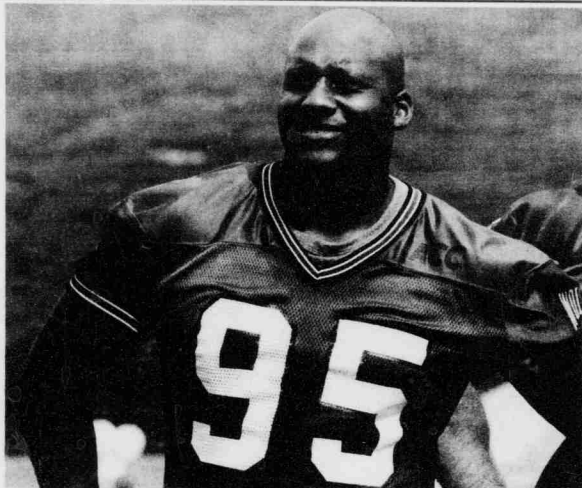
defense's fault why we lost," commented senior tackle George Williams, "Those days are over. It's a new season — our season."

Comprised entirely of players with two or more years of experience, the Pack's front four have proven thus far to be a stiff barrier for any opponent. Through a combination of field time and additional work in the weight room during the off-season, this veteran defensive line is brimming with confidence.

"This year's team is a big improvement, a very big improvement," defensive end Bobbie Cotton said. "I feel that there was a lack of toughness that was a big problem with last year's team. We're so close now, everything is connecting."
Cotten, along with senior Brad Collins, start at the defensive end position for the Pack.

In terms of leadership and togetherness, one need look no further than #93, Collins.

The 6-6, 257-lb. fifth-year senior provides the much-needed guidance that last year's team sorely missed. A three-year starter, Collins has been the backbone of the defense this year coming up big down the stretch. With his 20 tackles, 11 of which



George Williams takes a breather during practice. The senior defensive lineman is having a superb season this year.

ANDREW DAVIS/TODOR/STAFF

came against Georgia Tech, Brad also has been key in stopping the run this year.

Starting with Collins is Cotten, the 6-2, 240-lb. junior who, until last spring, was a mainstay in the linebacker position. The switch, brought on by his potential at the position, must have Coach

O'Coin smiling. Cotten has thrived at his new position, nailing 22 stops and leading the team with three sacks through the first half of the season.

Sharing time with Collins and Cotten is Kyle Blalock, a 6-4, 249-lb. senior who at the beginning of the season was only expected to play a limited role. But an injury to expected starter Clayton Simon forced Blalock into full-time action. He's more than lived up to expectations, though, contributing 15 tackles and three sacks.

In reserve are defensive ends Clint Johnson (Fr. 6-4, 249), Will Johnson (Fr. 6-2, 207), and a transfer from Garden City, Kan., Community College, Greg Derdner (Jr. 6-5, 265).

Plugging up the middle in the defensive tackle position is a squad of seasoned veterans and relative newcomers.

Leading the team at the tackle position is Williams, a 3-year starter from Roseboro, N.C. The 6-3, 287-lb. senior is fifth on the team in tackles with 40 stops, six of which have been behind the line. Williams is the workhorse on the line, having started 21 games the past two seasons while providing all-star caliber performances.

Alongside the veteran Williams in the trenches are transfer Andre Wray and letterman Tom Loughlin.

Wray, a teammate of fellow Garden City alumni Derrick, brings much needed experience to the tackle position. Wray has proven himself to be a quick study to the Pack's game plan

having contributed 16 tackles and a sack through the first six games.

Loughlin, standing at 6-7, 261-lb. has worked in the off-season to increase his strength, a move that's paid off with 12 stops for the senior.

In reserve are two red-shirt freshman, John Barksdale and Jeff Kuh, who will see limited playing time throughout the season.

This combination of able leadership for the defense leads Cotten to believe that all the hard work will pay dividends down the stretch.

"I think we're going to finish strong. We've had some tough losses, but the losses we've had are nothing to be ashamed of," Cotten said.

At 3-4, the Wolfpack defense will be hard pressed to contain the explosive offense of Florida State to have any hopes for a bowl bid. Still, Cotten insists the defensive line is ready for the challenge.

"Our strength is our confidence. We're confident that we can stop anyone we play."

“Those days are over. It's a new season — our season.”

— George Williams, on the weakness of last year's defense and a move that's paid off with 12 stops for the senior.

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ANDREW DAVIS/TODOR/STAFF

George Williams chases down a Wake Forest running back. So far this season, Williams has amassed 30 tackles, 18 of which were unassisted.

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Linebackers: stopping the run



Morocco Brown, #48, is poised to take his third tackling title in a row.

ANDREW DAVIS/TUCKER/STAF

■ The State linebackers are among the ACC's best.

CHIP SOUCY
Staff Writer

The key to this year's football team having a successful season was to improve on defense. The 1996 team was strong but had difficulty stopping the opposition. Virginia, Florida State, and North Carolina all had big offensive games against the Wolfpack. This season things had to change and some hard-nosed defense seemed to be the missing link.

The Wolfpack is now halfway through the season and an improvement in the defense has definitely been apparent. Much of the praise garnered by the defense has to go to the much-improved linebackers. This season, as opposed to the previous two seasons, the linebackers have dominated the opposing teams' running games and have also played well in passing coverage.

This year's line backing squad returned three starters and eight lettermen. Seniors Morocco Brown, Duan Everett, and Kit Carpenter bring experience and leadership to the squad.

Brown has lead the Pack the past two seasons in tackles and is on his way to his third-straight title. Junior Kevin Turks provides depth at outside linebacker after contributing 28 tackles for the Pack last season. Sophomores Tim Ramsieur, Sheldon Kee and Derek Roberts also show promise as the future of N.C. State's linebackers.

Freshmen Will Johnson and Tremayne Simmons will also work to contribute to the future.

This has proven to be a very strong and capable group. The linebackers have really stepped it up this year, and there might be more to come.

"So far this season, we've done OK," Sheldon Kee explained, "I

See **BROWN**, Page 10 ▶

They are the last line of defense

■ The defensive backs are out to prove they can dominate the opposition.

CHIP SOUCY
Staff Writer

An integral part of any team is its defense and an integral part of any defense is the cornerback position. Although having a tough campaign in '96, the cornerbacks have been solid this year with the potential to dominate opposing receivers.

The cornerback position is highlighted by the two returning starters, junior Hassan Shamsid-Deen from Atlanta, Ga. and sophomore Tony Scott from Lawndale, N.C. Hassan Shamsid-Deen has played well this season despite having an injured hand. Hassan is very good in man coverage and can also play the zone well.

His leadership and experience have aided and will continue to aid the cornerbacks.

The other starter, Tony Scott, is as equally talented as Deen at the cornerback position. Although Scott is just a sophomore, he has seen a lot of playing time and has brought valu-

able experience to his position.

He and Deen provide a very strong duo at their position.

Scott and Deen are backed up by senior Kevin Russell and sophomores Marcelle Hough and Lloyd Harrison.

This unit of cornerbacks is deep and has looked good, even brilliant at times, but they aim at making themselves better.

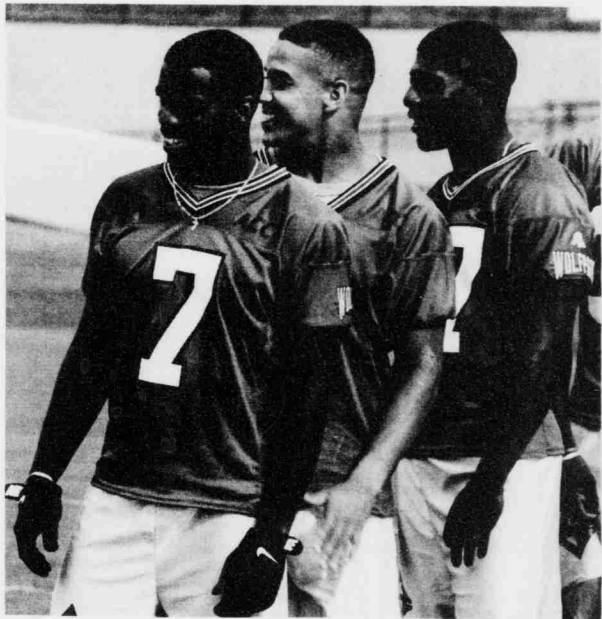
"We have made a lot of mental errors," Hassan Shamsid-Deen said. "We haven't reached our goal yet."

Mental errors could be due to the youth of the position, but there seems to be fewer errors each game as the players continue to grow. The cornerbacks look good and with continued improvement constantly frustrate opposing passing games.

They have had a good season as a unit and will need to continue their strong play for the remainder of the season.

"I haven't had my best game yet," Deen said, and that sentiment seems to be the common theme of the defense this season.

Look for Deen and the rest of the cornerbacks to have great games as the season continues.



Hassan Shamsid-Deen (No.7) at a recent practice. The junior cornerback lead the team in interceptions last season with four and has already made two picks this year. He, along with Tony Scott, poses a formidable challenge to opposing receivers in the league.

ANDREW DAVIS/TUCKER/STAF

Review

Continued from Page 3

Raleigh with its second straight loss of the season. State had lost all three of its games so far by a combined total of only 13 points.

October 18: North Carolina

NCSU	7
UNC	20

This was the game that Pack fans had waited for since the season began. Carolina, ranked fourth at the time, entered the game at 6-0 and owned the second-longest winning streak in the country behind Penn State. The Tar Heels also owned a four-game winning streak against the Pack, including the last two games in Carter-Finley. Add to all that the fact that Mike O'Cain had never beaten Mack Brown's squad and the odds seemed pretty stacked against the Pack.

Nevertheless, the spread was only 15 points against the Pack,

and after the kickoff State played like those 15 points were a bit too generous.

State stormed down the field on their first possession behind the running of Stephens and punched in a score with 8:19 left in the first quarter. The defense played extremely tough the remainder of the period, and as the first quarter came to a close State found itself in command of a 7-0 lead.

But that would soon change as Carolina's tailback Jonathon Linton took over. He ran for a career-high 177 yards on 34 carries, the highest totals yielded by the Pack this season so far.

And while Linton was tearing State apart on the ground, the Tar Heel defense was consistently getting to Barnette, forcing bad passes and preventing any kind of consistency through the air.

When the passing game fell apart, the UNC front could then focus on shutting down the run, which it did quite well. State finished the game with a mere 47 yards of rushing.

So when the final whistle blew, O'Cain crossed the field to congratulate Brown on yet another win at Carter-Finley, a 20-7 decision.

mentality. The linebackers have done well, but feel they can still do a little bit better.

The Pack still has the biggest test of the season ahead of it. This weekend the Pack takes on the high-powered offense of Florida State. This game looks to be the true test and will determine the toughness of the Pack defense.

Seniors

Continued from Page 7

rushing performance, highlighted by a 67-yard run that set up an easy Pack score.

His per-carry average for the season of 6.4 yards outclasses the next-closest running back on the team by nearly a yard-and-a-half, and is even further testimony to his ability to pick up big chunks of yardage when the Pack needs it most.

King won't finish as one of the Pack's top rushers, granted, but to say that his four years weren't productive or well spent because of that is a falsity.

While waiting for his chance to prove himself over the past three seasons, King has spent his time well: studying film, working on blocking techniques, conditioning. These were the seeds for success that King is now reaping on the football field this season.

Stephens and King. Two backs living out their four years to the best of their ability. And both equally successful.

Maybe this game will be the linebackers' best of the season and will please everyone in Carter-Finley, save for a little section on the end filled with supporters of the opposing team. With the talent and the experience the linebackers possess, State could be able to neutralize the running game of FSU.

Freshmen vie for action

■ The Pack's fresh faces look to contribute this season.

JAMES CURLEE
Assistant Sports Editor

Coming into the Wolfpack's 1997 campaign, Head Coach Mike O'Cain and his staff have brought in one of the most decorated recruiting classes in recent history. This 23-man class is comprised of 21 freshman, as well as two junior college transfers.

Not surprisingly, the class is dominated by offensive and defensive linemen, one of the weakest areas of the Pack in recent seasons. Eight of those new recruits play on the offensive side, and five on the defensive.

Also new to the team are three wide receivers, two linebackers, and one of each of the following positions: defensive back, tight end, fullback, place kicker, and punter.

Leading the way for this talented crop of recruits is a defensive tackle, Derek Allen. The gifted Allen (6-4, 270), was named to USA Today's "Super 25" team, and has the potential to contribute this season.

Joining Allen on the depth chart at this position is Rashad Streets. The 6-3, 280 lb. tackle was an All-American selection at Hargrave Military Academy, which also produced current State stars Carlos King, Torry Holt and Duan Everett, among others.

Other new defensive tackles include William Brown (6-4, 260) and Darius Bryant (6-2, 253).

Linebackers Nathaniel Goodson (6-2, 250), and Corey Smith (6-3, 225) are talented and aggressive, continuing the Pack's tradition of having the finest linebackers around.

Defensive ends Paul Whitaker (6-8, 235) and Andy VanDerVeer (6-4, 245) bring some local flavor to the defense, both hailing from North Carolina.

Defensive back Anthony Carson (5-9, 175) brings considerable speed to the defense.

The offensive side is headed up by a pair of wide receivers, Ricky Collins and Willie Wright. Collins, (6-4, 195) runs a 4.4 in the 40, and was a top-10 basketball prospect in the state of Georgia. Wright (6-4, 200) is a speedy wideout from Greensboro Page, which also produced for-

mer Wolfpack great and Houston Oiler Haywood Jeffries.

David Stringer (6-1, 190) and tight end William Pannell complete the list of freshman in skill positions.

Brausing fullback Harold Jamison (6-1, 245) joins the N.C. State backfield as the No. 7 running back in the northeastern United States coming out of Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Jackson brings a rare combo of strength and quickness, benching 400+ while running the 40 in 4.6.

Two offensive linemen also strengthen the Pack, as well as bringing in some much-needed size to the front. Keith Cartwright and Tim Turner showed very promising talent coming into the '97 campaign. Cartwright (6-4, 320) was selected 1st-team All-State out of Person High School, where he played with Jamie Barnette. Turner is by far the largest of the newcomers at 6-7, 350. Additional lineman joining State this year include Matt Broel (6-5, 280), Tommy DeFoe (6-3, 290), and Keegan Weir (6-6, 270). These three round out the new linemen, giving the Pack considerable size and strength.

Coming from the same junior college (Garden City, Kan.), transfers Greg Derrick and Andre Way have helped State's defensive line immediately, competing for a starting job. Both were rated in the top 16 JC prospects by SuperPrep magazine. Derrick (6-5, 250) was an all-state performer in South Carolina in high school. Way (6-7, 272) was also recruited by many Division-I schools to play basketball. Both said that they are still adjusting to ACC football, and are excited about this year's squad. Way also stated he was "impressed with the rookie class as a whole," and both agreed that the "future is very bright here at State." Way noted that "socially, there is a lot more to do in here (in Raleigh) than in Garden City. You have to be careful."

Also joining the Pack are place kicker Kent Pasingham, and punter Jesse Wade.

This class is highly touted as one of the most well-rounded, versatile recruiting classes in years.

It doesn't take a prophet to see that the Pack's football future looks mighty bright with this 23-man class.

Brown

Continued from Page 9

think our best game is still to come."

This could sum up the attitude of this year's squad and their



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The specialists of N.C. State

■ Members of the special teams squad are often overlooked but equally important.

RYAN KELLOGG
Staff Writer

The Wolfpack special teams remain a source of explosive potential this year. Coming off a '96 season that featured an All-American place kicker and a nationally-ranked punt returner, the '97 team has some high standards to live up to. Fortunately, thanks to many returning starters, the Pack has the ability and experience to continue its success.

Leading off in the place kicker position is senior Chris Hensler. For Hensler, the task of filling the shoes of a player like Marc Primanti — the first team All-American and the NCAA's most prolific kicker for a single season — is no easy job. But Chris has used his skills as last year's kick-off man to do an adequate job. Midway through the season Hensler is 7 of 13 for field goals and a perfect 20 of 20 for point after attempts.

Jason Biggs, the 5-11 senior, takes up double duty for the '97 season as the team's punter and place-kick holder.

Biggs was a freshman walk-on, but through the years has developed into one of the leaders on the team. In preparation for his duties this season, Biggs has focused on his kicking accuracy and placement while hoping to cut down on last year's blocked punts. So far this season Jason is averaging 38.8 yards per punt and has had no blocks.

Providing the snap for the kickers this year are senior Larry Daughtry and sophomore Andy Mallard.

Daughtry, a three-year starter at the long snapper position, has had a career of excellence. In a position where a bad snap means disaster, Larry has been the model of perfection, never missing his target. As proof, Daughtry was the one who provided all the snaps for Primanti's record-breaking season in 1996.

On the return side the Pack's specialists this season are a veteran group of talented offensive and defensive players with one emphasis: speed.

This strength is no better

embodied than leading kick-off returner, Alvis Whitted.

Whitted, the fastest man in the ACC and a potent receiver on offense, remains just 202 yards short of overtaking Ralph Stringer's (1973-77) record of 1,591 career return yards. Last season Whitted amassed 455 yards returning including a Wolfpack record 174 yards in a single game against Florida State. So far this year Whitted has 14 returns for 349 yards, an impressive average of 24.9 yards a return.

Even if opponents wisely kick away from Whitted, they still have to deal with Rahshon Spikes.

Spikes, the sophomore tailback from Meriden, Conn., was a terror in the games he returned kicks in last season. His marks of 158 and 144 return yards against Clemson and East Carolina, respectively, were both good enough for placement in State's top five kickoff return yardage in a single game. Spikes has continued his success through this season's first six games, averaging 19.4 yards per kick-off return.

Taking up punt return duties are starting cornerback Tony Scott and, as of recently, leading receiver Torry Holt. Scott, a 5-11, 186-lb. sophomore, was last year's number-one punt returner for the Pack, averaging 9.71 yards per return. An average which was good enough to rank the freshman 43rd in the nation last season. So far Scott has had five returns for 25 yards this season.

Holt's role has emerged just recently as a punt returner but early signs indicate he may be used more down the road. Torry was first used in the role in the game against Georgia Tech, but his two returns for 77 yards, including a 56-yard barn-burner, are proof enough of his potential ability.

Clearly this year's special teams have a good chance to influence the team's ultimate success. As the Pack fights through the daunting part of its schedule against nationally-ranked defenses, field position and field goal percentage will become increasingly important, a challenge special teams hopes they can live up to.

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