

‘Championships written all over him’

Chizik comes to UNC after 2-year hiatus

By Pat James
Sports Editor

She knew the time would come. For two years, Jonna Chizik, the wife of North Carolina defensive coordinator Gene Chizik, cherished every second with her husband and children, knowing the day would eventually arrive.

They went on family vacations. They held family game nights. They celebrated Thanksgiving, and above all else, they escaped the college football lifestyle that previously defined their family dynamic.

Football wasn't a part of the equation for the first time in their relationship. But a return to the game, a return to reality, was never ruled out.

"We took it one day at a time without really boxing ourselves in, saying, 'This is the next step, or that is the next step,'" Gene said. "There were a lot of conversations about being open-minded, about what the next thing would be if there was a next thing coaching-wise."

That next thing came this past offseason, on Jan. 19 to be exact, when Gene ended his coaching hiatus and elected to assist Coach Larry Fedora in an effort to rebuild the UNC defense.

The day Jonna anticipated was here.

United by football

She barely knew him.
Jonna's path intersected

with Gene's in the late 1970s at Clearwater High School in Florida, where her father coached him in football. But Jonna, who was in elementary school at the time, doesn't remember when she first met her future husband.

"I didn't really know him then, but he has known me forever," she said.

Their paths diverged. Gene attended Florida before entering the coaching ranks. Jonna went to Clearwater and later Florida State. But football reunited them.

After graduating from FSU in 1991, Jonna returned home. And for Christmas, Gene did the same. In his first full-time college-coaching gig at Middle Tennessee State, he came to Clearwater on a recruiting trip. He left with a companion.

They spent time together over the holiday and began dating shortly after. In 1996, they got married and had three children — twin girls and a boy — within their first three years of marriage.

And as quickly as Gene established a family, he proved himself a football coach — a defensive guru known for his attention to details and a track record of success.

He landed his first defensive coordinator job in 1998 at Central Florida and made the leap to the same position at Auburn in 2001. There he constructed one of the best defenses in the nation.

So when Texas head coach Mack Brown needed a new defensive coordinator after the 2004

season, he called Gene.

"The guy's got championships written all over him," said Brown, who coached at UNC from 1988-97. "He's very smart and passionate about football. He's a great teacher, and the kids and the staff on his side of the ball really buy into him."

And that's what they did. With Gene at the helm of the Longhorns' defense, Texas captured the 2005 BCS National Championship.

But even with all of his success, the family never stayed in one spot for long. They remained in Texas for one more year before heading to Iowa State, where Gene served as the head coach.

The emotional and mental toll weighed on everyone — they searched for a place to call home.

A promise kept

She knew it was the right decision.

After two seasons at Iowa State, Gene accepted the head-coaching position at Auburn in 2009. The Chiziks moved again, their fifth state change in eight years — but the family welcomed it.

The twins started preschool in Auburn during Gene's first stint with the Tigers. And, for once, they didn't need to form new relationships. The Chizik's maintained their roots in Auburn. And like any good set of roots, they dug deep. Jonna and Gene made a promise to their

SEE **CHIZIK**, PAGE 7



DTH/DILLON DEATON

New North Carolina defensive coordinator Gene Chizik watches over UNC defense during Tuesday's practice at Navy Field. He hasn't been a defensive coordinator since 2006 at the University of Texas.

No weight too heavy for Junior

From the Ivory Coast to UNC, the defensive end has never stopped.

By Brendan Marks
Senior Writer

A story? Not here. Not yet, at least. But come in, watch him. Maybe we're all just a little early.

Don't get too close — the bar is heavy, after all. It always is, if you look close enough. Forty-five, 35, 45 again. Up, down, up, down, rhythmic as breathing, but never as easy. He's used to it, though; he has been for seven years now.

Maybe that's when his story begins, the day Junior Gnonkonde arrived in America — but probably not. Ask. Watch him squirm, then smile, his eyes squinting in laughter. What story, you say?

Just watch the bar, how he maneuvers the strain on his arms, his chest — it weighs on all of him. For the North Carolina redshirt junior defensive end, it's heavy. But not unbearable. A family, a town, now his whole team; all that weight is a lot to carry.

"I'm not there yet," Junior says, and a grin escapes. "I just need to keep learning, and then one day, I will be better."

Look again — he's still going, lifting. It's all he knows at this point. Up, down, up, finally. The end of the session. He sits up and inhales. It's good to see him breathe from time to time.

Maybe we're not so early, after all.

Don't drop the bar yet

It's August 2008, and a plane lands in San Francisco. A boy gets out, stretches. It's a long flight from Abidjan, a big city back in the Ivory Coast. He still hasn't made the trip back.

They came to play basketball. Junior's still 14 and rail thin, but his love of sport is sturdy.

He'll need to start lifting soon, but Junior already knows about strength. A karate background, growing up the second-youngest of eight kids — the first step of lifting is being mentally set.

His team wins, but there is no celebration — he has a bigger goal in mind. Junior and three teammates want to stay in America.

They head to Georgia. One of the boys knows a coach in Lakeland. Lanier County, population: 3,400, plus four more.

Six months pass, and the boys' legal guardian leaves. They don't. Junior and the others need a place to stay, someone to take care of them.

God bless John White, athletic director at Lanier County High School.

"Basically there was nowhere for them to go, so I took two," White says. "Legally adopted Junior."

White enrolls Junior at Lanier County, language barrier and all. Junior speaks no English. Spanish it is, because the teacher speaks French, and so does her newest student.

Don't drop the bar yet — it gets heavier.

With his teacher's help and Rosetta Stone, Junior's English is passable by Christmas. Back to the start, the reason he came: basketball. He joins

SEE **JUNIOR**, PAGE 7

Landon Turner takes the road less traveled

The UNC offensive lineman has faced his fair share of adversity.

By Jeremy Vernon
Assistant Sports Editor

As a winter storm rocked parts of northeast Texas, Landon Turner had just one thought on his mind: getting to Chapel Hill.

It was Jan. 9, 2011 — move-in day for the incoming freshman — and just one day after he had competed in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl, one of the most prestigious high school all-star games in the country.

He was 1,022 miles from UNC, and while the winter weather had not reached the game's venue of San Antonio, several rainstorms in the area added to an already stressful situation.

Turner rushed to the airport to try and catch the first plane to North Carolina, eventually settling for a flight into Fayetteville, 224.5 miles from the University.

Because UNC could not give Turner a ride due to NCAA rules, the freshman would have to find his own way to make the trek. Luckily for Turner, a family friend and father of former UNC fullback Kenny Owens lived in the area and offered to give him a lift.

Turner would arrive on campus late that night. With classes starting the next day, he eventually settled in and awaited the journey to come. He had finally made it, and in the end, that was all that mattered.

"I was just excited to kind of get on campus," he said.

"I was only stressed out about it because I was like, 'I can't be late before I even get there.' But everything worked out kind of seamlessly."

While Turner's first day on campus was less than conventional, it was just another step in the road he had traveled since high school — one filled with adversity — and one he would soon meet again in Chapel Hill.

The road back

During his sophomore year of high school, Turner had to learn how to walk.

On the first series of the

first game of the season for Harrisonburg High School in Virginia, Turner broke his left ankle and suffered severe ligament damage to his foot.

"There were a lot of expletives ... I think I said every one I knew," he said.

"I was very emotional because I could tell the severity of it. I didn't know how bad, but you get a feeling."

A metal plate and three screws were placed in his ankle that night. Despite early optimism that he would perhaps return to the team for a playoff game, he was eventually ruled out for the season.

The next few months consisted of strenuous rehab, as he slowly transitioned from a hospital bed to a wheelchair, then to crutches and finally a walking boot.

But when Turner eventually returned to the football field the next fall, he began to craft a legacy that placed him among the best players in Harrisonburg history. In his final two seasons with the Blue Streaks, Turner earned All-State honors twice and helped the team's running backs rush for over 5,000 yards.

He verbally committed to play for North Carolina in July 2010, the summer before his senior year of high school. Later that month, the NCAA launched an investigation into the program.

It was still early on in the recruitment process, and as the news of the investigation began to spread, Turner's family sat down with him to discuss the possibility of changing schools. But Turner had no intention of backing out — he had made his bed, and he was prepared to lie in it.

"He was very adamant," said Dawn Womack, Turner's mother. "He said, 'Let the chips fall where they may. Carolina is my home, and I made a commitment. I'm a man of my word, and I'm going.'"

The road in between

When Turner joined the North Carolina football team in January 2011, he did so under Butch Davis, who had led the Tar Heels to an 8-5 record and a bowl win the season before.

That spring, Turner spent the majority of his time adjusting to the speed of the college game in



DTH/TYLER VAHAN

Senior offensive guard Landon Turner (78) at the UNC football team's 2015 media day. Turner has been on the starting lineup since 2012.

the coach's pro-style offense.

But with pressure from the NCAA investigation mounting against the University, UNC decided to fire Davis on July 27. The Tar Heels eventually named Everett Withers interim head coach, but Turner never played a snap for him, as he redshirted the 2011 season.

That winter, North Carolina found its new leader in Larry Fedora, an offensive mind from Southern Mississippi with a drive to return UNC to the success of the past.

Fedora brought with him the spread offense — an attack vastly different from the pro-style game Turner had spent almost two years learning. And while he would have to learn a new system, perhaps the most daunting aspect of the coaching change was the physical one.

For Turner to gain the mobility needed to play in the spread, he needed to lose a considerable amount of weight. But rather than sulk about the changing cast around him and the work he needed to put in, he embraced it.

"Coaches getting fired and new coaches coming in changes the systems. Those were things that were out of my hands," he said.

"I could complain about it, get angry about it, but at the end of the day I still have a job to do and responsibilities to maintain."

It was the mantra Turner carried with him throughout the offseason — to focus on the things you can control.

He eventually dropped from 350 pounds to 320, giving him the physical makeup to challenge for a starting role in 2012.

Turner got his chance in

October, as an injury to fellow lineman Brennan Williams left a spot open in the starting lineup — one Turner would fill the final four games of the season.

"I think that stretch of four games was the biggest growth that I had in the system that we have now, even more so than in the spring or in training camp before it," he said.

Once Turner gained a grip on the starting job, he never looked back. He went on to start in 23 games the next two seasons, along the way earning both All-ACC and Preseason All-America honors.

The road ahead

When Turner was in the first grade, he made a vision board for a class art project. He and his fellow students were told to draw a picture of what they dreamed about being when they grew up.

He wasted no time getting to work. While other kids drew pictures of themselves as policemen and firefighters, Turner drew a picture of himself sleeping with an NFL blanket.

The words around the picture read: "While I was sleeping, I dreamed I was a player in the NFL."

As Turner progressed through his college career, the NFL dream seemed like it could become a reality. He did whatever he could to make sure he was in the best position to achieve his vision.

While other players kept to themselves, Turner always looked to his older teammates for advice on how to make him-

SEE **TURNER**, PAGE 7

Marquise Williams takes off the cape

By Evan Chronis
Staff Writer

Marquise Williams doesn't have to be the hero anymore. In the past two seasons, the North Carolina quarterback was in many situations where he had to carry his team when

he set 18 school records. But as the fifth-year senior looks forward to what the upcoming season has in store for him, Williams knows this is what his whole career has been leading up to. The 6-foot-2, 225-pound quarterback says he is the

healthiest he has been since his sophomore year of high school, and his coaches believe he has finally reached the maturity level expected of him.

"Just watching Marquise mature as a quarterback — and that's in every aspect of what's going on — it doesn't mean he still doesn't make mistakes," Coach Larry Fedora said. "But he understands now when a mistake is made whether it's him or anybody.

"The cliché that the game has slowed down, what it really means is that a guy has become comfortable. The game hasn't slowed down, but his decision-making process is so much faster."

Williams hopes to ditch the stigma of savior in order to get his teammates involved — but also in an effort to protect his body.

"Whatever my team needs me to do, I'm going to do it," Williams said. "There were times last year where everyone was covered, and I ran. I could have dumped it out, but

I didn't. I just took on the role of trying to be the hero.

"That's not what it's about this year."

The hip injury Williams sustained near the end of the 2014 season kept him out of spring practice, but he is fully healed after having a successful surgery on his partially torn labrum.

While the injury might have slowed him down, it also helped him improve in the offseason.

"It started in spring practice when he wasn't able to go," said quarterbacks coach Keith Heckendorf. "He came out and got 1,000 mental reps. Instead of getting the physical reps, which he has gotten plenty of through the course of his career, he was able to focus on the mental side of it."

While injured, Williams was also able to help aid the growth of his backup, sophomore Mitch Trubisky, who this time last year was considered Williams' competition instead of his backup.

"I think me and (Marquise)



DTH/TYLER VAHAN

Senior quarterback Marquise Williams (center) is the leader of UNC's 2015 team, but he's trying to let other players be the hero.

work together well," Trubisky said. "We are always pushing each other in meeting rooms and on the field."

Williams enters the 2015 season on many preseason award watch lists, including the Maxwell Award watch list for the nation's best player.

But his own personal goals for the season are completely

different.

"I'm trying to stay humble," he said. "It's good to be on the Heisman watch list, but my goal is to get to Charlotte twice this year, in September and December (for the ACC Championship)."

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10:30 am

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Welcome (back) to Carolina, both newcomers and old Carolina hands! We, some of the faculty who are followers of Jesus Christ, are delighted that you're here with us on the Hill. You'll find plenty of challenges, many occasions for joy, and lasting rich relationships. Each of us would be glad to listen and to talk about adjustments, managing academic life, finding friends and fellowship, our own belief in Jesus Christ, local churches, or anything else. Phone, or better yet email, anytime. And check out <http://beaconsonthehill.org> or <http://www.everystudent.com>.

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Wide receivers (from left) Quinshad Davis, Bug Howard, Damien Washington and Jordan Cunningham at the football team's media day.

UNC wide receivers to fans: Welcome to the Freak show

By Logan Ulrich
Assistant Sports Editor

They call themselves Freaks — and the North Carolina receiving corps takes pride in the name.

“We’re the lively guys,” junior Mack Hollins said. “Freak receivers exciting all crowds.”

The name originates from co-offensive coordinator and receiving coach Gunter Brewer.

Every receiver he’s ever coached — which has included mega-talents like Randy Moss and Dez Bryant — is a part of the Freaks.

They can be big, like 6-foot-5 junior Bug Howard, who’s been taking snaps at tight end in practice.

They can be fast, like junior Ryan Switzer, who

took a short screen pass 63 yards for a touchdown against Pittsburgh in 2014, a play quarterback Marquise Williams still raves about.

Or they can be part machine, like senior Quinshad Davis, who had metal rods inserted into his legs this offseason after suffering from a broken tibia and stress fractures.

Davis needs only one more touchdown to pass Hakeem Nicks — another former Freak — for most career receiving touchdowns in Tar Heel history.

The Freaks are one of the most talented groups on the team. The top four of Davis, Hollins, Switzer and Howard present a unique challenge for opposing defenses.

All of them believe they can beat defenders in one-on-

one situations, and with four of them on the field, someone will always be single-covered.

The group also boasts experience and depth.

The starting four are all upperclassmen and played significant roles on the team in 2014.

“For those guys coming back, there’s not many things that they’re going to see that’s going to surprise them,” Switzer said.

“Anytime you get experience out there, guys that have done it, guys that have been in the jam-packed stadiums, guys that have been down in the fourth quarter situations, it helps a lot.”

Behind those four, talented youngsters like sophomore Austin Proehl and freshman Juval Mollette will be looking to establish them-

selves as bona fide members of the Freaks.

In addition to most talented, the Freaks also lay claim to the tightest-knit group on the team.

Switzer calls the group “nutty,” and Davis says that while the receivers have different personalities, they all mesh well together.

“We have cookouts, go out to movies — we do a lot of stuff together,” Davis said. “Pretty much everything we do is together.”

On Sept. 3, when the receivers join together on the field at Bank of America Stadium for the season opener against South Carolina, Mack Hollins knows what’s about to go down.

“It’s freak time — showtime.”

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UNC secondary aims to remind fans of ‘rude boys’ moniker

By C Jackson Cowart
Assistant Sports Editor

With two new defensive coaches in charge, the “rude boys” were in for a rude awakening.

The North Carolina defensive backs, who have maintained the self-appointed moniker since the late 1990s, prided themselves on physical play and dominant defensive coverage.

But after finishing 101st out of 125 teams in pass defense, the Tar Heels brought in two hard-nosed headmen in defensive coordinator Gene Chizik and defensive backs coach Charlton Warren to restore order to a reeling secondary.

“(They) came in with a different scheme and a different mindset for everybody,” said junior cornerback Brian Walker, who swapped jersey numbers this offseason. “We all needed discipline in our technique and everything.”

“It’s a new beginning for us.”

Under Warren’s command, it all starts with accountability. The former Air Force player and coach has drilled the fundamentals into his squad, threatening lost playing time for those who fail to meet his expectations.

“It’s been intense,” said junior cornerback Desmond Lawrence. “They want to make sure we know what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. They’re really making us students of the game.”

With the hiring of Chizik, UNC abandoned its complex 4-2-5 defense in favor of the more traditional 4-3 setup. For the secondary, the transition means fewer responsibilities and greater understanding of basic assignments.

As a result, Lawrence anticipates fewer breakdowns in the secondary in 2015 —

one season after the team allowed 22 plays of 40 yards or more, the most of any team in a major conference.

“We’re going to know what we’re doing (this year),” Lawrence said. “You don’t have to run all over the field. You’re kind of stationary. You get lined up faster and it allows us to play faster.”

“It’s going to allow for our talent to show.”

UNC returns three starters from its 2014 unit in Walker, Lawrence and junior safety Dominique Green, with senior Sam Smiley viewed as the incumbent starter at free safety. And with sophomore corner M.J. Stewart and freshman safety J.K. Britt challenging for starting roles, the Tar Heels appear to have a wealth of talent at their disposal.

But for Warren — the no-nonsense defensive backs coach who is yet to announce the starters for UNC’s opener against South Carolina on Sept. 3 — no job is secure. Playing time is earned.

“Every day you wake up, you have an opportunity,” he said. “It doesn’t matter who is playing, who gets injured or who has to go in a game. There’s an opportunity every moment you get out of bed.”

“That opportunity started the day I walked on campus.”

For Lawrence, this season provides an opportunity for the UNC defensive backfield to return to its glory days.

“I think there’s been a drought in the North Carolina secondary,” he said. “We can’t just say, ‘We’re rude boys,’ or we’re this or we’re that.”

“We’ve got to bring that back.”

And on Sept. 3, they’ll get a chance to show the Gamecocks what rude really means.

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Senior wide receiver Quinshad Davis is hoping to set school records in multiple categories including total receptions and touchdowns.

Special teams unit looks for turnaround

UNC kickers made only six field goals during the 2014 season.

By Ben Coley
Senior Writer

According to Coach Larry Fedora, junior Nick Weiler is guaranteed to handle some kicking duties this season. Kickoff duty, to be more specific. But that's where promises end for the specialists. Redshirt freshman Corbin Daly is expected to start at punter, but junior Joey Mangili is also vying for the spot. At place-kicker, Weiler and redshirt freshman Freeman Jones remain in serious contention. But Fedora does not plan on making, or at least announcing, any final decision until the opening game versus South Carolina on Sept. 3. "The competition) is still close. We haven't made a decision yet," Fedora said. "But how close? I don't know. We still have a ways to go." Weiler and Jones hope to improve a kicking game that struggled heavily in 2014. The team only converted six field goals, and the longest was 30 yards — good for 125th and 128th in the nation, respectively. "Last year, there was reluctance if it was more than 10 (yards)," Fedora said. "I can't say that was good. I can't say I had complete confidence every single time those guys went out there. "But I can tell you this: We've been much better this camp. I feel better about where those guys are at this point." Weiler made five out of eight field goals in 2014.

Jones has yet to attempt a kick at the collegiate level, but he did come to UNC ranked by 247Sports as the No. 5 place-kicker in the class of 2014. With Thomas Moore and Weiler exchanging kicking duties a season ago, Jones spent his redshirt season getting acclimated to the environment. Now, he is learning how to approach stiff competition. "I try to worry about myself really; that's about all I can do," Jones said. "I can't really control anything (Weiler) is doing. I just come out and try to run the plan that I have and go from there." The punters face a different issue. Daly or Mangili will be tasked with replacing three-year starter Tommy Hibbard, who was an All-ACC honorable mention in 2013 and named to the All-ACC Second Team in 2012. Daly entered UNC ranked as the second-best punter in the class of 2014, according to 247Sports. And similar to Jones, he spent his first year in Chapel Hill learning from the sideline. "Hibbard) was definitely a great punter," Daly said. "But I'm looking forward to see what comes. I'm ready to ball out and hit some bombs." Daly's mentality epitomizes the special teams unit entering this season. Although their positions are not promised, each player is willing to make the same guarantees — there will be improvement, and there will be points scored. "I know that the special teams unit as a whole will be ready to do well," Weiler said. "We will be a weapon for the team this season."

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2015 Starting Lineup

- Offense
- 12 - Marquise Williams

8 - T.J. Logan

14 - Quinshad Davis

3 - Ryan Switzer

81 - Kendrick Singleton

13 - Mack Hollins

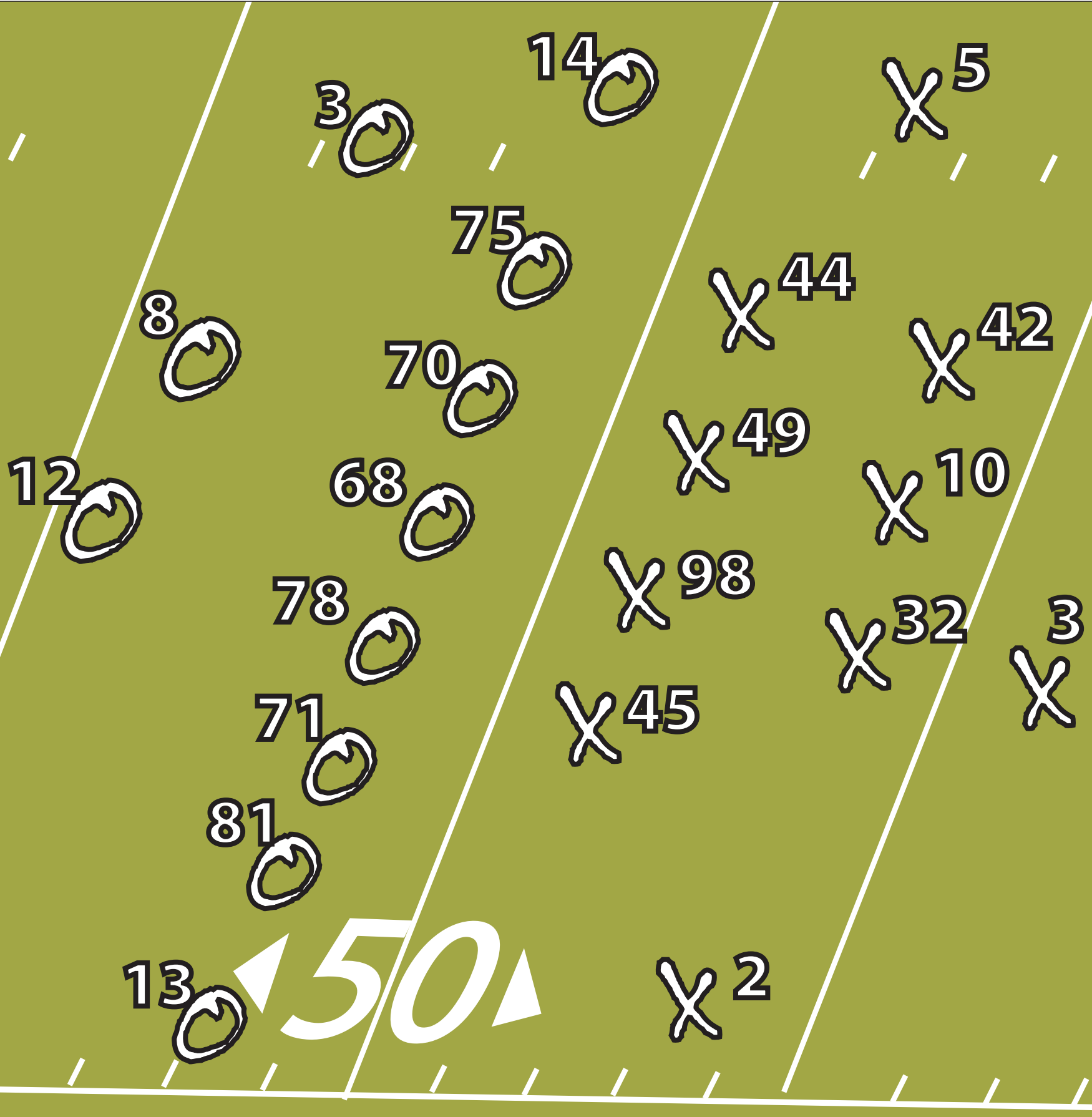
75 - Bentley Spain

71 - Jon Heck

70 - Caleb Peterson

78 - Landon Turner

68 - Lucas Crowley



- Defense
- 44 - Junior Gnonkonde

45 - Mikey Bart

49 - Jeremiah Clarke

98 - Justin Thomason

32 - Joe Jackson

42 - Shakeel Rashad

10 - Jeff Schoettmer

5 - Brian Walker

3 - Sam Smiley

2 - Desmond Lawrence

15 - Donnie Miles

QUINSHAD DAVIS, THE CUSP OF GLORY

‘One of the best receivers to come out of North Carolina’

By Carlos Collazo
Senior Writer

The first time Quinzettia Posey noticed her son had taken an interest in football, he was just 3 years old. Posey and her mother had taken a young Quinshad Davis to a local high school football game. From that Friday night, when he took in the game, the players, the lights — he was hooked. "He knew then that this is what he wanted to do," Posey said. "That always grabs me. I talk about that a lot. Ever since he was three." Davis didn't actually start playing until two years later, but that didn't matter. His mother thinks back to when she would come home from work and see Davis playing a football game on a Sega Genesis, amazed that he had figured out the controls at such a young age. Davis would sit on the couch and practice getting his hands up as his father, James Davis, passed him a ball. "We went to the football game, and he was like, 'Mamma this is what I want to do,'" she said. "And I was like, 'Well, baby, that's what you're going to do.' "And he did exactly that."

'He would get it done'

The field Quinshad Davis found himself on a little more than a decade later was at Gaffney High School in South Carolina, playing for Dan Jones, who still coaches the Gaffney football team. Davis was solid his first two years, spending his first season on the junior varsity team. His breakout season came as a junior. The next two years, Davis caught 202 passes for 3,490 yards and 41 touchdowns, leading Gaffney to a state championship as a senior. "He was just so sure-handed," Jones said. "(He) wanted the ball thrown to him, and every time he had an oppor-

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'Try to keep it humble'

A few receptions, yards and touchdowns later, Quinshad Davis is preparing for his fourth — and final — season as a wide receiver on the North Carolina football team. Not only that, but he's on the cusp of several UNC career records. He is 31 catches shy of breaking Hakeem Nicks' receptions record of 181 and is tied with Nicks' record of 21 touchdowns. But don't ask him about any of that. Because he doesn't much care. He's tired of talking about it. His own mother didn't even know about the records until she read about them online. "I was like, 'Quinshad, why didn't you tell me?'" Posey said. "And he was like, 'Well, Mama ... He's not really concerned with that. "If it comes, it comes. If it doesn't, it doesn't." More than likely, though, it's going to come. If starting quarterback Marquise Williams has anything to say about it, it's going to come sooner rather than later. "Hopefully we can get the record for him in the first game (against South Carolina)," Williams said. "I'm excited man; it would mean so much to me to give that to him and say that I played with one of the best receiv-

ers ever to come out of the University of North Carolina." By the way the two players talk about the record, you could argue that Williams is more excited than Davis. "I do whatever the team needs me to do. I'm not a selfish person," Davis said. "I'm just doing my job. Helping the team get a win." But while Davis is quick to turn away from record-breaking talk and likes to look at team performance rather than individual efforts, he's not lacking for confidence himself. He's still the same kid who called for the ball on fourth and eight back in Gaffney. The same kid who always, Jones said, "wanted the ball thrown his way in tight situations."

"If you aren't confident in yourself, then who's going to be confident in you?" Davis said. "A quarterback can't throw the ball to someone who's not confident. I feel like I have all the ability and all the talent to make any play. I feel like I can get the ball on any down any time the quarterback drops back. I feel like if he throws it to me, he's throwing it to a good person. "I have a lot of confidence. I just try to keep it humble instead of (cocky)." During the summer, though, much of that confidence was lost.

'What you need to do'

Quinshad Davis broke his right tibia on UNC's final offensive play of the 2014 season, putting him out for the entirety of the Tar Heels' spring practices. The surgery he needed left him unable to walk or jog for almost four months, and he wasn't able to do everything he wanted — run, jump, cut — for another three months. "At the beginning of camp, I was definitely kind of scared," Davis said. "I have a little hesitation ... I mean I jump and catch the ball,

but I'm still kind of scared to come down a little bit." As with most things, Davis turned to his mother. "She was just like, 'Q, it's all in God's plan. It's meant to happen. Everything happens for a reason,'" Davis said. "She was just telling me, 'Keep your head up, work hard and rehab hard, and come back from it.'" The words of comfort from his mother helped renew Davis' confidence. Helped him avoid thinking about the injury. Now, with just under a week before the season opener in Charlotte — about 35 minutes away from Gaffney — Davis says he feels like he's back to 100 percent. And he's not thinking about records. "Pretty much over the whole summer," Davis said, "I was like, 'Golly, Q. It's been four years. It happened so fast. This is your last year. Take advantage of it.'" First and foremost, Davis is trying to help the Tar Heels win. But — ever the 3-year-old with his mother, waiting to be a football player — Davis is also looking to improve his draft stock and fight his way into the NFL. "I definitely want to get more recognized this year," Davis said. "I want to get more exposure this year because I definitely want to enter the draft. I want to raise my draft stock." Of course, Davis has talked with his mother about this subject. And just like when she encouraged Davis when he was 3 years old and playing in his first football game, Posey is encouraging her son now. "You said it when you were young," she told her son. "You said that this is what you want to do. You can't be scared. God already healed you. "So you go out there, and you do what you need to do."

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UNC running backs TJ Logan, Elijah Hood vie for starting role

By David Allen Jr.
Staff Writer

From going to the movies, playing video games and sleeping on air mattresses during training camp, the North Carolina running backs are always looking to have fun. But when it comes to talking about their results from a season ago, when they finished 81st in the nation in rushing yards, the running backs become a lot more serious. The trio of T.J. Logan, Elijah Hood and Romar Morris ran the ball 251 times for just 1,119 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2014. Meanwhile, quarterback Marquise Williams led the team with 788 yards on the ground and 13 scores on a team-high 193 carries. "Personally, as a running back, I would hate that," said Hood in regards to a quarterback leading the team in rushing again. The amount of carries Williams had in 2014 took their toll, as the quarterback underwent surgery this past off-

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to 200 yards a game on the ground, which is something the offensive unit is on board with. Last year, they averaged just over 150 yards a game. "I want to be part of that 200 yards — it's a mentality," said Hood, a sophomore. "I just want enough carries to win the football game — whatever that may be." When it comes to splitting carries, nobody knows for sure what the Tar Heels will run out on Sept. 3 against South Carolina — not even Fedora. "You could see anything," Fedora said. "We've got all kinds of things working right now." A sense of urgency is filling the locker room when it comes to achieving the goals set by the coaching staff. And although the group is still determined to enjoy their time together, they know it's running short. "I've been here a year now," Hood said, "You've only got so many years in the program."

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Tight ends add versatility to North Carolina offense

The position group will look to contribute in unorthodox ways this upcoming season.

By Danielle Herman
Senior Writer

They call themselves "the hybrids." A cross between tight end and wide receiver, the group can bring some flexibility to the North Carolina football team's offense. "It's just kind of like half-man, half-machine, you know," said redshirt freshman tight end Brandon Fritts. "We can do some of the stuff receivers do — I mean not everything — but we can do some of the stuff receivers do. And we can do some of the stuff that linemen do." UNC will need that hybrid versatility at the tight end position this year, as the team returns only one player to the position. That player, senior Kendrick "Bull" Singleton, has been playing the "Y" position, a cross between tight end and wide receiver, in the Tar Heels'

offensive scheme. The rest of the group are redshirt or true freshmen. Fritts, in particular, will look to get some playing time this season. The additions of freshmen Jake Bargas and Carl Tucker — who were ranked the No. 13 and No. 4 tight ends in the class of 2015 by ESPN.com — add depth to the unit. "The hybrids" are close, and while the younger players look up to Singleton, he doesn't want them to feel like he can't learn from them, too. "I tell them, 'Just because you're younger than me, that don't mean you can't help me out, too,'" he said. "If you see me drop a ball, tell me to do 10 pushups. If you see me do something wrong, correct me on it." In 2014, Jack Tabb started at tight end after Eric Ebron departed for the NFL following his junior season. Tabb, at 6-foot-3 and 250 pounds, and Ebron, who was 6-foot-4 and 245 pounds while at UNC, were both physically bigger than Singleton and junior receiver Bug Howard, who could also be playing tight end this season when needed in certain formations. Singleton and Howard are 6-foot-2

and 215 pounds and 6-foot-5 and 210 pounds, respectively. Fritts is built more like a typical tight end at 6-foot-4 and 245 pounds. "We just try to make up for (the size difference) in the way we block," Singleton said. "We're just doing what we can, and the scheme is little bit different adjusting to that problem. We don't really run that much attached sets. We split people out wide, so we can have more space in the defense." Seth Littrell, the assistant head coach for offense and the tight ends coach, said the variance in body types adds to the versatility of the group. "You've got Bull, who's more a big receiver who can move around and do some tight end things, and then you've got Brandon Fritts, who's been growing into more of an on-the-line, more of a true tight end body," he said. "And both those guys have done a lot of good things. The good thing about it is we can be very multiple at what we do at that position. "It's a true hybrid group."

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Senior wide receiver Quinshad Davis is hoping to set school records in multiple categories including total receptions and touchdowns.

Special teams unit looks for turnaround

UNC kickers made only six field goals during the 2014 season.

By Ben Coley
Senior Writer

According to Coach Larry Fedora, junior Nick Weiler is guaranteed to handle some kicking duties this season. Kickoff duty, to be more specific. But that's where promises end for the specialists. Redshirt freshman Corbin Daly is expected to start at punter, but junior Joey Mangili is also vying for the spot. At place-kicker, Weiler and redshirt freshman Freeman Jones remain in serious contention. But Fedora does not plan on making, or at least announcing, any final decision until the opening game versus South Carolina on Sept. 3. "The competition) is still close. We haven't made a decision yet," Fedora said. "But how close? I don't know. We still have a ways to go." Weiler and Jones hope to improve a kicking game that struggled heavily in 2014. The team only converted six field goals, and the longest was 30 yards — good for 125th and 128th in the nation, respectively. "Last year, there was reluctance if it was more than 10 (yards)," Fedora said. "I can't say that was good. I can't say I had complete confidence every single time those guys went out there. "But I can tell you this: We've been much better this camp. I feel better about where those guys are at this point." Weiler made five out of eight field goals in 2014.

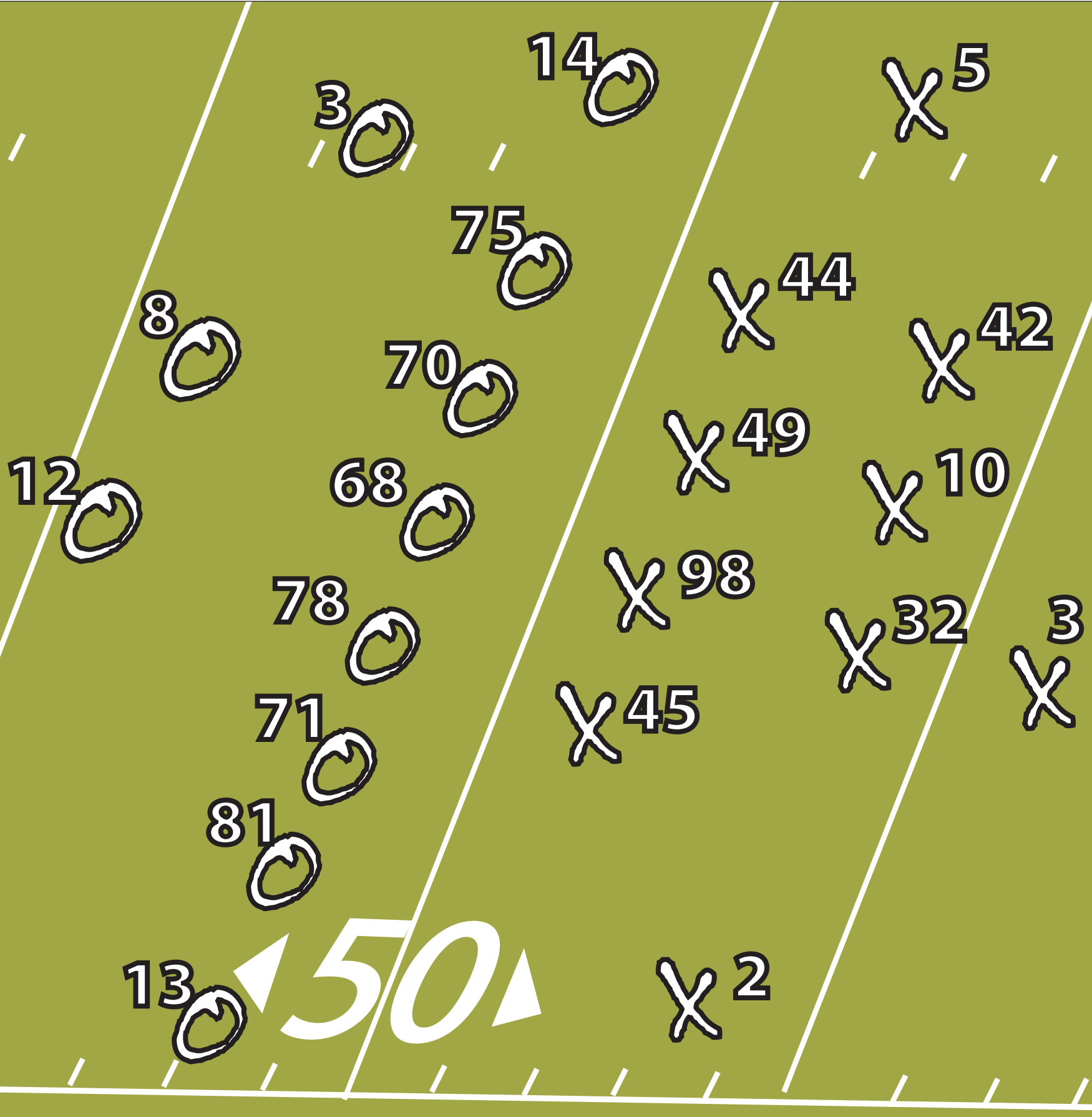
Jones has yet to attempt a kick at the collegiate level, but he did come to UNC ranked by 247Sports as the No. 5 place-kicker in the class of 2014. With Thomas Moore and Weiler exchanging kicking duties a season ago, Jones spent his redshirt season getting acclimated to the environment. Now, he is learning how to approach stiff competition. "I try to worry about myself really; that's about all I can do," Jones said. "I can't really control anything (Weiler) is doing. I just come out and try to run the plan that I have and go from there." The punters face a different issue. Daly or Mangili will be tasked with replacing three-year starter Tommy Hibbard, who was an All-ACC honorable mention in 2013 and named to the All-ACC Second Team in 2012. Daly entered UNC ranked as the second-best punter in the class of 2014, according to 247Sports. And similar to Jones, he spent his first year in Chapel Hill learning from the sideline. "Hibbard) was definitely a great punter," Daly said. "But I'm looking forward to see what comes. I'm ready to ball out and hit some bombs." Daly's mentality epitomizes the special teams unit entering this season. Although their positions are not promised, each player is willing to make the same guarantees — there will be improvement, and there will be points scored. "I know that the special teams unit as a whole will be ready to do well," Weiler said. "We will be a weapon for the team this season."

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2015 Starting Lineup

Offense

12 - Marquise Williams
8 - T.J. Logan
14 - Quinshad Davis
3 - Ryan Switzer
81 - Kendrick Singleton
13 - Mack Hollins
75 - Bentley Spain
71 - Jon Heck
70 - Caleb Peterson
78 - Landon Turner
68 - Lucas Crowley



QUINSHAD DAVIS, THE CUSP OF GLORY

‘One of the best receivers to come out of North Carolina’

By Carlos Collazo
Senior Writer

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Linebackers play integral role on Tar Heels’ defense

The starting three all bring different qualities to the unit.

By Logan Ulrich
Assistant Sports Editor

Three of them walk onto

the field. A leader, a jester and an underdog. Together they form the North Carolina starting linebacker corps. Easily recognizable because of his flowing blonde hair, senior Jeff Schoettmer is the leader. In 2014, the former walk-on

finished second on the team in tackles and had two interceptions, both of which he returned for touchdowns. “The coaching staff always spoke so highly of Jeff, but it didn’t take me long to see why,” said linebackers coach John Papuchis. “You could see he was kind of the top dog in the room; the other players kind of fall in line behind him.” As the middle linebacker in defensive coordinator Gene Chizik’s 4-3 scheme, Schoettmer is the literal and figurative heart of the defense. It’s up to him to organize his teammates before every snap and provide the leadership needed to run his side of the ball. He’ll have help from

the jester in the Tar Heels’ linebacking corps, senior Shakeel Rashad. After only starting two games in 2014, Rashad plans to start every game this season. But the increase in playing time demands an increase in responsibility. The coaching staff has challenged Rashad to provide more leadership now that he’s starting. Despite being one of the most gregarious and vocal players on the team, it took time for him to feel comfortable in that role. “I was really hesitant early, I still am sometimes, as a leader,” Rashad said. “But now I’m just willing to accept it a little more. If I see something wrong, I’m more willing to call it out.”

With Schoettmer established as the defensive captain, Rashad is freed to lead by example instead. “He doesn’t always have as much of a vocal role in terms of leadership, but that’s not necessarily his role in the room,” Papuchis said. “He’s a veteran that models the behavior I want the other guys to follow.” Finally, there’s the underdog. After spending most of his first two seasons as a sparely used reserve, junior linebacker Joe Jackson won the final starting outside linebacker position in a competition with sophomore Cayson Collins. Collins had an impressive freshman season and both Papuchis and Schoettmer lauded his tal-

ent. But Jackson’s reliability impressed the coaching staff in training camp. “Joe doesn’t make mental mistakes; he’s reliable every play,” Schoettmer said. “That’s something that we need — guys who won’t make that blatant error that will hurt our defense.” With time ticking until the season opener, questions still wait unanswered about how the defense will perform relative to 2014’s lackluster unit. But whatever happens on Sept. 3 against South Carolina, one thing is sure. These three — the leader, the jester and the underdog — will be in the middle of it. @loganulrich sports@dailytarheel.com



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UNC coaching staff welcomes new faces

North Carolina revamped its defense coaching staff after a disappointing 2014 season.



Gene Chizik
Defensive coordinator

After a two-year hiatus from coaching, Gene Chizik accepted the defensive coordinator position at North Carolina in January. His previous gig was at Auburn, where he served as the head coach from 2009-12. With Chizik at the helm, the Tigers won three bowl games, including the 2011 BCS national championship game. Prior to becoming the head coach at Auburn, he was the head coach at Iowa State for two seasons. His resume also includes defensive coordinator jobs at Central Florida, Auburn and Texas.



John Papuchis
Linebackers coach

John Papuchis joined the North Carolina coaching staff in February after coaching at Nebraska from 2008-14, including the past three seasons as the defensive coordinator. He also served as Nebraska’s defensive line coach and special teams coordinator during his time with the Huskers. Papuchis’ first job was at Kansas, where he served as a graduate assistant from 2001-03. He then joined the coaching staff at Louisiana State in 2004, where he was a defensive intern and graduate assistant.



Tray Scott
Defensive line coach

Tray Scott made the transition from the Football Championship Subdivision ranks when he accepted the North Carolina defensive line coach position in March. Scott was the defensive line coach at UT Martin, an FCS school, from 2013-14. Previously, Scott served as a graduate assistant coach at Mississippi for the 2012 season. He was also a graduate assistant at Arkansas State for the 2010-11 seasons, and spent 2008-10 as a graduate assistant at Arkansas Tech, his alma mater.



Charlton Warren
Defensive backs coach

Charlton Warren signed on with North Carolina in February as the new defensive backs coach, following one year coaching the Nebraska secondary. Warren guided the Huskers to the nation’s fourth-ranked pass efficiency defense in his sole season with Nebraska. The former Air Force defensive back spent eight seasons with his alma mater, starting as the secondary coach in 2005 and serving his final six years in the defensive coordinator capacity. He also handled recruiting duties from 2008-11.



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CAMPUS RECREATION

JUNIOR

FROM PAGE 1

the team, plays, but then, something new.

"I saw some big guys working in the gym, so I asked my coach, 'They're pretty big ... how can I be like that?'" Junior says. "And he said, 'No, you don't need to be — they play football.' I said, 'Really? Let me try.' So I tried."

And the first practice?

"I got hit pretty hard — I quit the next day."

It isn't that easy, Junior. You've got to keep pushing, or the weight, it'll crush you.

"The coach called me and said, 'Don't worry, I will teach you. I'll make you bigger, faster, so you'll be able to compete with them,'" Junior says. "This is how things started."

Taking shape after all

Lakeland isn't exactly a football hot spot. Put some

more weight on the bar.

"Once he got to 10th, 11th grade, being so much physically stronger than everybody ... all our other coaches were spending their time teaching these other bad players how to field the position," White says. "And they basically told him, 'Go get the football.'"

But Junior was special — the small-town chosen one. He committed to Georgia Tech as a junior, Lakeland's first Division I football player.

"He's an icon," White says.

Then came 119 tackles and nine sacks as a senior. Time to put down the weight, right?

Or not. Low test scores, they said, when they took his scholarship.

Exhale. Bring the bar down. Feel it press, weight building. Then lift, again, lift it all off.

Suitors came, but in Chapel Hill, Junior found a second chance. He came to play bandit, but through two seasons, has nothing to show.

"Physically he's got all the tools," White says. "He just sent me a text saying he benched 465. There ain't a lot of people, even in the NFL, that can bench 465."

He's grown. The rail-thin boy is now the team's strongest.

"Junior's really done well," defensive coordinator Gene Chizik says. "He's really taken some steps forward from where he was in the spring."

Keep lifting, Junior. His teammates' cries of 'Jun-Jun,' fill the weight room. More reps.

The story? It's taking shape, after all.

A boy becomes a man, for his long-lost family.

"I am by myself here," Junior says. "Being here without family ... it's a little bit hard, but I'm a man, so it's up to me to keep going."

For all of Lakeland and the man who took him in.

"I've pretty much been his daddy for the last seven years," White says. "It's the relation-

ship God gave us. He's my son."

For his teammates, awaiting a great breakthrough.

"I refuse to let them down, and they refuse to let me down," Junior says.

For himself, what could be.

"Why do I play?" Junior pauses. "One, I play because God gave me the ability to be an athlete, and I don't want to waste that talent, that gift. But I play because football will give me a better life ... That's why I play, to get a better education."

That's why he's here, isn't it?

"I couldn't understand why a momma would leave her 14-year-old son, let him go halfway across the world," White says. "He said they didn't have the same opportunities that he could forge over here."

Stop. Set down the bar. Stand up, and walk away from the bench.

That's enough weight for now.

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TURNER

FROM PAGE 1

self better. And when some of those teammates moved on to the next level, he made sure to keep in touch.

"The biggest thing I've said to him is to outwork everybody," said former UNC offensive lineman Jonathan Cooper, now with the Arizona Cardinals.

"Make sure that you know your plays and really just focus on being the best player you can be. Don't let

all the outside stuff distract you."

Turner has shown he is no stranger to the path less traveled. Instead of waiting for things to come to him, he has taken the initiative to make himself better — to control the things he can control.

And if the fifth-year senior eventually finds himself in a position to make an NFL roster, that drive could make all the difference.

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CHIZIK

FROM PAGE 1

children — the twins could finish school in Auburn.

"We were gone probably four years, but this is what they consider home," Jonna said.

Four years and another national championship later, that guarantee remained intact. After a 3-9 record in 2012 resulted in Gene's dismissal from Auburn, the family stayed put. Gene opted to not return to football in 2013 or 2014. He traded his spot on the sideline for spectator seats at his son's games and practices.

The family caught up on lost time. They spent time with friends and family they hadn't seen. They celebrated Christmas at home instead of at a bowl game. Stepping away from coaching allowed Gene to get a taste of what he'd missed.

"I would never trade the

two years I had with my family for anything," he said.

In 26 years, Gene had never been fired. Although he didn't regret his final season with the Tigers, he often reflected on it and searched for closure.

He still worked in college football as an analyst with Sirius/XM Radio. But it wasn't the same. Jonna savored the time with her husband — she knew it wouldn't be long.

"The thing he missed the most was being on the field," she said. "He loves coaching those kids. He loves interacting with them, and more importantly, he loves changing lives and being a part of the process of changing lives. And he really likes to win."

An offer he couldn't refuse

She knew it was time to say goodbye.

After UNC offered Gene

the defensive coordinator position in late December, the whole family mulled over the decision for days.

"It was a matter of the right fit at this stage in the game," Jonna said. "As a family, you have to be mindful. You've moved your family so many times. What is going to be the best fit for the family? And we felt like (UNC) was the best fit."

The idea of Jonna staying with the kids as Gene left to coach had been an afterthought through his career. Despite the chaos associated with constantly moving, they would never consider separating.

But they had made a promise. With Kennedy and Landry entering their senior years of high school, Gene and Jonna weren't going to make them move again. There was only one option — Gene had to leave the family behind.

With the start of the season

less than a week away, Jonna knows Gene won't have an off day until February. She and the kids will attend Thursday's season opener against South Carolina, marking the first time she'll have seen her husband in nearly six weeks.

But to her, the children and Gene, the past two years have been everything.

"I've seen a renewed something in his spirit. I think it has everything to do with the two years off. He'd done it for 30 straight years. I think it was like 29. I lost count before I even met him. That had to be a grueling and exhausting pace because it's the whole year, all year, and they get very little time off."

"It probably was the best, worst thing that ever happened to us as a family, those two years."

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UNC defensive line eyes return to glory

By Brandon Chase
Staff Writer

Julius Peppers isn't walking through the tunnel. For that matter, neither is Kareem Martin, Sylvester Williams, Quinton Coples or a host of other North Carolina defensive linemen who have since left Chapel Hill and gone on to make a name for themselves in the NFL.

Instead, the present Tar Heel defensive front is looking to pick up the pieces after being one of the key culprits on a unit that ranked last

in the ACC in almost every meaningful statistical category a season ago.

But the crop of UNC linemen that takes the field on Sept. 3 against South Carolina will be a much deeper, more focused and more physical group than the one Tar Heel fans grew accustomed to in 2014.

"I think that it's been a work in progress," said defensive coordinator Gene Chizik about the defensive line. "But I think that there has been some major, major improvement since the spring."

For the line to return to its former glory, the Tar Heels need that improvement to remain steadfast — but this

group knows it cannot rely on just one superstar.

They must rally around each other, Chizik and new, ultra energetic defensive line coach Tray Scott to create the formidable front line that Chizik's new 4-3 defensive scheme requires.

"I think I have a good seven or eight guys that, really, I wouldn't mind putting any one of them in there," Scott said. "And that's from tackle to D-end, and I like it like that. We need quality depth."

Much of that depth will come in the form of underclassmen, including two defensive tackles, Jeremiah Clarke and Tyler Powell, that Scott singled out as his stand-

out performers throughout fall and spring camp.

"We got a little bit banged up in the spring, and I don't remember Jeremiah missing a snap," Scott said. "And it's been the same deal carrying over to the fall. As far as Tyler Powell, he does exactly what he ask him to do. He has great twitch."

Clarke, a redshirt freshman, is currently slated to start at defensive tackle. And the sophomore Powell is looking to improve upon an injury-riddled freshman campaign that showed promise.

Those two, along with sophomore Nazair Jones, will form the core of a defensive tackle group that does not

lack for talent and could be ready to come of age in the fourth year of Coach Larry Fedora's tenure.

The Tar Heels will rotate through a group of more experienced defensive ends — Junior Gnonkonde, Jessie Rogers, Dajaun Drennon and Mikey Bart — looking to create chaos off the edge and make the Kenan Stadium faithful forget about what happened a year ago.

"This is not the same team that you saw last year," Jones said. "And definitely not the same team that you saw two years ago against South Carolina."

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Offensive tackle Jon Heck (left) directs members of the UNC football team's offensive line as they prepare for a drill at practice Tuesday.

Offensive line continues ascent

By Mohammed Hedadji
Senior Writer

The road to success has been an uphill climb for the North Carolina offensive line.

But through injury and attrition, this unit has shown the ability to combat any obstacle and looks poised to be a strength of UNC's offense this season.

The offseason for these Tar Heels was a bright one, kicked off by the emergence of a young stud, Bentley Spain.

Coming out of spring training camp, Spain earned himself the starting left tackle position — a spot that is known as the most important on the entire line.

"Our quarterback's health depends on it," said senior offensive guard Landon Turner on the importance of Spain's position. "I know (the coaches) all trust him wholeheartedly."

"We trust him."

Coaches and players have praised Spain for his high football IQ and ability to learn and adjust quickly. But the sophomore still looks to his older teammates for guidance.

"When I enrolled early a couple years ago, I was the only O-lineman at the time that was coming in," Spain said. "They really took me under their wing."

One of the most impactful mentors has been Turner, a preseason All-American. The four-year starter sets the tone for the line everyday.

"He's an incredible leader," Spain said. "He's very calm, but he gets fired up when he needs to be."

As these players progressed throughout the offseason, they showed they could bring intellect, ability and depth to the trenches in 2015. But trouble hit as training camp began.

The line took its first loss when backup guard Jared Cohen left the team for personal reasons.

The first day of training camp saw both starting center Lucas Crowley and backup center Will Dancy go down due to injury. While Crowley is expected back for UNC's season opener against South Carolina on Sept. 3, Dancy will miss the remainder of the season.

Despite a tumultuous training camp, the players have spun a positive outlook and maintained a high level of football.

"There's no getting around the fact that it's dishearten-

ing to see your brothers going down like that," Turner said. "But those are things that you can't control."

UNC's injury woes have forced players to shift to different positions and learn new techniques. But this is a task this group was prepared for.

"This is something we have always talked about, cross-training our guys," said offensive line coach Chris Kapaiovic. "It showed that they put the time and effort in."

While the Tar Heel offensive line has faced many difficulties this offseason, not one has proven too big for this band of brothers. Their presence provides confidence to both coaches and players.

"I tell those guys they're the best offensive line in the country," said quarterback Marquise Williams, "And that's what you need."

A tough road lies behind this offensive line, but expectations are still high. And with its starting center hoping to return soon, the team believes the future looks bright.

It's all uphill from here.

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