

The Herald-Sun 2004 FOOTBALL ALL-AREA FIRST TEAM

OFFENSE, SPECIAL TEAMS



QB: COREY CLAYTON

Riverside, Senior, 5-10, 180

Came back with a bang after missing most of his junior year with an ankle injury. Operating out of the Pirates' spread offense, Clayton debuted with a 392-yard, seven-TD game against Wake-Forest Rolesville and finished the year 198-for-352 for 3,096 yards and 31 TDs. Named PAC-6 4-A Offensive Back of the Year.



RB: BRANDON CUTHRELL

Northern, Junior, 6-0, 180

Moved from LB to RB two games into the season and immediately changed Northern's fortunes, rushing for 1,378 yards and 17 TDs on 229 carries. Averaged 184 yards rushing in four conference games and earned All-PAC-6 4-A honors. Had a season-high 245 yards vs. Riverside. Also handled punting duties for the Knights, averaging nearly 40 yards per kick.



RB: REGGIE HICKS

Southern Vance, Senior, 6-0, 190

Broke nearly all of older brother Richard's school rushing records while on his way to 2,064 yards and 31 TDs on 256 carries. The Northern Carolina 2-A Offensive Player of the Year rushed for 100-plus yards in 13 of 14 games and topped the 200-yard mark twice, including a season-high 240 yards vs. Louisburg. Twenty-one of his runs went for 40 or more yards.



OL: KYLE DAYE

Jordan, Senior, 6-1, 322

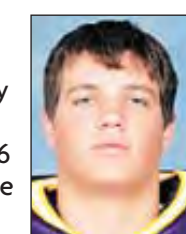
Four-year starter on the Falcons' offensive line graded out at 88 percent for the season without allowing a sack. Also made 76 tackles. The PAC-6 4-A's Offensive Lineman of the Year.



OL: LOWELL DYER

Riverside, Senior, 6-5, 275

Big, strong, intelligent blocker who graded out at 90 percent or better in every game this season. The four-year-starter earned All-PAC-6 4-A honors and started in the Shrine Bowl.



OL: CARL JOHNSON

Southern, Junior, 6-6, 305

Fast, strong and full of potential. The All-Five County 3-A selection has been rated one of the country's top OL prospects in the Class of 2006 by The Sporting News Magazine.



OL: KEANON ORR

Southern, Senior, 6-0, 275

Third-year starter was an anchor of the Spartans' offensive and defensive lines and helped the Spartans pile up more than 4,000 yards rushing. An All-Five County 3-A pick.



OL: JAMAL REAMS

Northern, Junior, 5-10, 210

One of the quickest, most athletic members of Northern's offensive front. Recorded a team-leading 98 percent blocking grade for the season while starting all 13 games.



TE: MARSHALL WILLIAMS

Riverside, Junior, 6-3, 175

Used primarily as a receiver in the Pirates' wide-open offense. Caught 49 passes for 734 yards and 10 TDs and also rushed for two TDs. All-PAC-6 4-A pick also is a basketball standout.



WR: MAURICE COVINGTON

Southern, Senior, 6-4, 200

Big-play weapon in the Spartans' ground-based offense caught 19 passes for 300 yards. Also started at OLB. All-Five County 3-A and Shrine Bowl pick. Committed to Virginia as a junior.



WR: NATE FULLER

Riverside, Senior, 5-10, 185

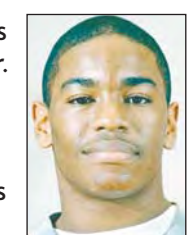
Speedy, three-year starter caught 72 passes for 1,010 yards and six TDs, with most of his yards coming after the catch. Topped the 100-yard mark three times. All-PAC-6 4-A selection.



ATH: DEVON MOORE

Cedar Ridge, Junior, 5-10, 180

Did it all for the Red Wolves in his third season as a starter. Rushed for 1,206 yards and 10 TDs on 142 carries (season high was 264 yards) and also caught 18 passes for 257 yards and a TD. Averaged 33 yards per kick return and returned an interception 41 yards. All-Mid-State 2-A pick.



K: ZACH GORNTO

Jordan, Senior, 6-3, 190

Booted 11 field goals, including seven from 30 yards or more and three from 40 yards or more, including a 46-yarder. Also nailed 25 of 29 PATs. Named to All-PAC-6 4-A.



P: TAYLOR GRAY

Orange, Sophomore, 5-7, 145

Reliable punter for the Panthers who averaged 37 yards per kick while also hitting 13 PATs and three field goals, including a season-long kick from 37 yards. Led Orange in receiving, too, with 11 catches for 211 yards, including the game-winning catch against rival Cedar Ridge.



KR: RUFUS BULLOCK

Northern Vance, Sophomore, 5-11, 170

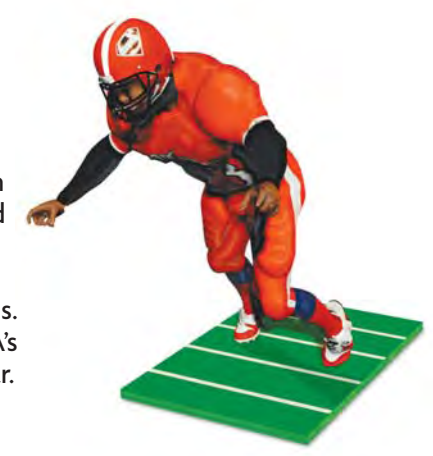
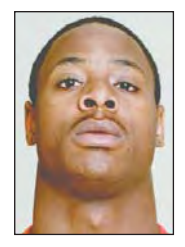
One of the most electrifying return men in the area took two kicks back for long touchdowns, a 90-yarder vs. South Granville and an 83-yarder vs. Warren County. Also rushed for more than 500 yards.



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DEFENSE

DL: CHARLES GAMBLE
Southern, Senior, 6-3, 200

One of the top pass rushers in the state led his team in sacks and rated second on his team in tackles. Gamble also rushed for 1,452 yards and 19 TDs with a season-best of 297 yards vs. Burlington Williams. Named the Five County 3-A's Defensive Player of the Year.



DL: DECARLO HEADEN
Northern, Senior, 5-11, 165

Missed out on the PAC-6 4-A's Defensive Lineman of the Year by one vote after a stellar senior season in which he registered 103 tackles, including 21 tackles-for-loss and 10 sacks. Also was in on 12 quarterback hurries. Missed one game. Named All-PAC-6 4-A.



DL: SHAWN KEARNEY
Southern Vance, Junior, 6-1, 195

In his third season as a starter, the rushing end continued to shine. He recorded 89 tackles with 14 sacks, upping his career sacks total to 43. He also tallied a safety, forced two fumbles and batted down a pass. An All-Northern Carolina 2-A selection for the second straight year.



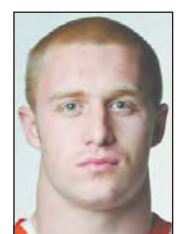
DL: KINNEY RUCKER
Jordan, Senior, 6-3, 260

Fast-moving Duke recruit tallied 60 tackles, including 12 tackles-for-loss and nine sacks. Also intercepted a pass, caught three TD passes and returned a kickoff for a TD. Name the PAC-6 4-A's Defensive Lineman of the Year. He intercepted a pass in the Shrine Bowl.



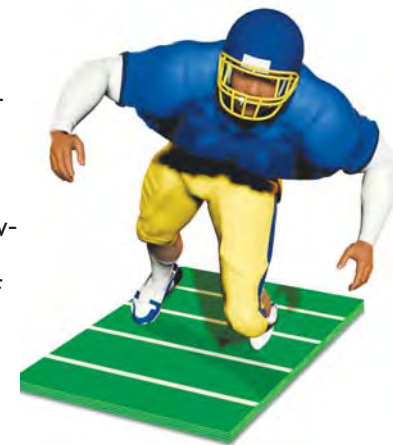
LB: TREY BRENNER
Southern, Senior, 6-0, 205

East Chapel Hill transfer became the leading tackler on a team that went 13-1 and reached the 3-AA East Regional final. Also rushed for 310 yards and 5 TDs. An early graduate and invited walk-on at UNC, he will suit up for the Continental Tire Bowl.



LB: MARIO DAWSON
Northern, Senior, 5-10, 235

Made a team-high 166 tackles with 32 tackles-for-loss, seven sacks and 16 QB hurries. Also had two INTs (one returned for TD), forced two fumbles and recovered a fumble. Named the PAC-6 4-A's Defensive Back of the Year. Finishes his career with more than 400 tackles.



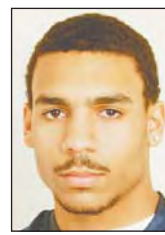
LB: CHRIS SMITH
Northern, Senior, 5-11, 209

Despite missing two games with an injury, he piled up 121 tackles, with 16 tackles-for-loss. A dropper for the Knights, he broke up nine passes and returned an INT for a TD vs. Fayetteville Byrd. Forced one fumble and recovered a fumble. All-PAC-6 4-A.



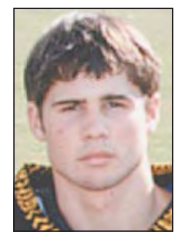
LB: JOHARI WIGGINS
Jordan, Senior, 6-2, 197

Fast and physical player made up for missing his entire junior year with a knee injury by recording a school-record 170 tackles this season, including 18 tackles-for-loss and six sacks. Also broke up three passes. Named All-PAC-6 4-A.



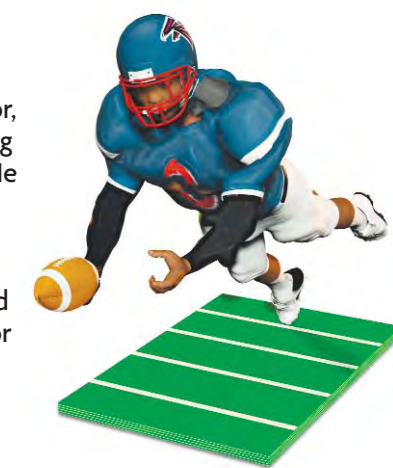
DB: JOSH BLITCHINGTON
Chapel Hill, Senior, 6-0, 169

A three-year starter and a three-time All-PAC-6 4-A selection was one of the Tigers' leading tacklers this season with 77.5 stops. Intercepted one pass, broke up three passes, forced two fumbles and recovered a pair of fumbles. Also played special teams.



DB: RODNEY NELSON
Jordan, Senior, 5-10, 172

After making a name for himself as a junior, Nelson found teams throwing away from him this season. He still managed to get in on 14 pass breakups and intercept three passes while also registering 68 tackles. Named to the All-PAC-6 4-A team for the second straight year.



DB: T.J. WILSON
Southern, Junior, 5-8, 170

Big-play threat on defense and incredible athlete who also spent time at RB, QB and WR while punting and returning kicks. Named All-Five County 3-A for the second-straight season and is on pace to earn 12 varsity letters in football, basketball (guard) and baseball (shortstop).



DB: BRANDON WOODS
Southern, Senior, 6-2, 200

Another Southern player who could have made All-Area on both sides of the ball. The Virginia recruit led the Spartans in interceptions, including four in the state 3-AA playoffs, and caught 27 passes for 426 yards. An All-Five County 3-A pick and Shrine Bowl starter at receiver.



7 POINTS ON THE BOARD
2004 season by the numbers

1 Canceled game for Southern because of hurricane weather. The Spartans did not play West Brunswick on Sept. 17. Oddly enough, Southern moved into the No. 1 spot in the Associated Press 3-A poll the next week and held it through the rest of a 10-0 regular season.

2 PAC-6 4-A games left for Northern after an 11-10 loss to Chapel Hill. The Knights won both and celebrated their 50th year of football by winning the conference title for the 20th time in 21 seasons.

3 Teams in the Northern Carolina 2-A that were unbeaten when conference play started: Bunn, Southern Vance and Southeast Halifax. After winning their league openers, each team was 5-0 before they began knocking each other off.

4 Players from the area who made the North Carolina Shrine Bowl team: Riverside OL Lowell Dyer, Jordan DL Kinney Rucker and Southern WRs Brandon Woods and Maurice Covington.

5 Playoff teams out of the five-team PAC-6 4-A — the second time that has happened since the NCHSAA expanded its playoff format to eight brackets. All five teams won at least four games to be among the 64 Class 4-A teams who were eligible for the playoffs.

6 Positions played by Southern junior T.J. Wilson: Quarterback, running back, wide receiver, defensive back, punter and kick returner.

7 Times a Cedar Ridge game was decided by a touchdown or less. The Red Wolves won two of those games, beating Northwood 24-17 and Eastern Alamance 24-23.

8 GO FOR TWO ... Teams in the PAC-6 4-A when the NCHSAA's new alignment kicks in next fall: Chapel Hill, East Chapel Hill, Hillside, Jordan, Northern, Person, Riverside and Southern.