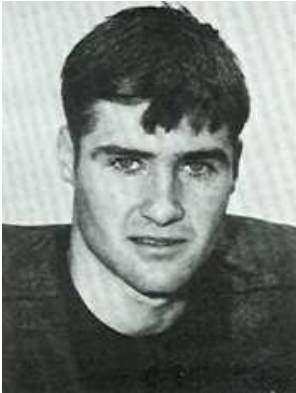


Gamecock Memories with ... **Tyler Hellams**



Before we began the interview and were looking through some of his memorabilia from his playing days, Tyler mentioned that despite the fact that Greenwood High School had been a pipeline to Clemson under Pinky Babb, the Tigers had not recruited him because he was “too slow. They recruited big guys back then”. We’ll pick up from there...

As you are a member of the Greenwood High School Hall of Fame and were named the AAA Back of the Year by the Greenville Touchdown Club in 1967, you were obviously a high profile high school player. You mentioned being recruited by Carolina but not Clemson. Did anyone else recruit you?

Not until late my senior year. Georgia started recruiting me, Florida started recruiting me and then the smaller schools - Furman, The Citadel, all those offered me scholarships but Carolina was the primary one. I think it was because we had a big old tight end named Eddie Bolton; they wanted Eddie so I kinda went along with the package (laughs). Eddie was about 6-3, 210 and could run like a deer.

Where would you have played if not USC?

I’ve never really thought about it. Probably Furman, maybe PC or somewhere like that. I don’t think I would have gone to Florida. Could’ve gone to Georgia, that was close to Greenwood.

As a sophomore you were able to push your way into the starting lineup despite the presence of some seniors like Wally Orrel and Butch Reeves. I recently read some old 1968 newspapers and Coach Dietzel was singling you out for praise in fall drills. Were you expecting to see playing time that season, did you realize there was an opportunity?

Yes, I did. Toy McCord was a safety when I was a freshman and Toy was pretty good and he would’ve been the starting safety if he would’ve come back but he signed a baseball deal. So when he left that opened the door up for me. I’d played safety in high school. I started off in the Duke game that year as a halfback (Ed. Note - that was terminology then for cornerbacks) and Wally Orrel was the safety. After that game I did so bad that they switched us, moved him to strong safety, moved me to the weak-side safety and put Don Bailey as the halfback.

That ’68 team had some hard luck with injuries and lost some really close ones - 14-7 to Duke, 21-19 to Maryland and 21-20 to Georgia. Not counting the final game with Clemson, what are your memories of that year?

The Duke game, the first game I ever played in, stands out. They had a quarterback named Leo Hart who was real good and Wes Chesson, who was an All-ACC receiver. They were sophomores too, we were all sophomores, so we saw each other for two more years after that. That game stands out to me because they really worked on me bad. Then the next week we played North Carolina and that was the game they jumped out 28-3. We came back and scored 28 points in the fourth quarter and beat them, that was a good game. Also at Florida State, they had a wide receiver, Ron

Sellers, who went on and played pro. He set, I think, an all-time receiving record against us that game. We had them down, Suggs had a real good game and we were on top of them. They punted and I roughed the kicker, I was blocked into the kicker. Of course, I didn't rough him, I was blocked into him. (Laughs). It was fourth down and about 18 yards, so that penalty only gave them 4th and 3 - it wasn't an automatic first down back then. They moved the chains and couldn't remember where the chains were - when they finally settled on the spot, they measured it and barely did make the first down. They went on to score, tied the game up and then scored again and beat us 35-28. I never will forget that game. Of course, the Clemson game was '68 where I ran the punt back for a touchdown. And the opening kickoff, they almost scored on the opening kickoff and I made the tackle - I always played safety on the kickoff teams - and then they kicked a field goal on that first drive, 3-0. That's the way it was until late in the third quarter. If anybody ever had a career game, that was it.

You also intercepted two passes in that game, correct?

Intercepted two passes, broke up a couple more passes, that was a big day.

The next year, 1969, you come out and suffer a broken leg in the first game returning a kick.

Yeah, Duke game, broke my leg, so I got a redshirt year. I got to play two quarters of our ACC championship year.

That had to be a tough year to sit out.

Yeah, that was pretty hard. Then the next year I came down with mono in the pre-season. Billy DuPre, Ken Walkup and I all came down with mono. Fortunately nobody else on the team got it. I missed three games and came back in the North Carolina game and the first series I intercepted a pass, so maybe something went right.



That team, much like the '68 team, had some big wins - 43-7 over Wake, 38-32 over Clemson, 35-21 over UNC - but several narrow losses including 21-15 to Maryland and 20-18 to Tennessee. As a senior you were fifth on the team in tackles and tied with Bo Davies for second in interceptions. The team had a winning record (6-5) but closed with a loss to Clemson. The team was breaking in a new quarterback (junior Glenn Morris) that year - did 6-5 about match your expectations or were you expecting bigger things in your final season?

No, I was expecting better than that. We lost a couple of games we shouldn't have lost. We should've beaten Duke and we should've beat Clemson. The Clemson game, they had five or six interceptions and still only beat us 17-7. We had a pretty good defense that year. Our offense struggled at some times and the defense stayed on the field a whole lot.

It was a disappointment to be 6-5, we were expecting a better year than that.

It looked like there was a wave of injuries at tailback, and Dickie Harris ended moving over from defense to tailback late in the year, then he went down in the Clemson game.

I think he actually got hurt in the Wake Forest game the week before. He really added a lot to our offense. Dickie Harris was a tremendous ballplayer. He was just a tremendous athlete. He could play basketball, baseball or anything. He was just so fast - it's amazing what a little speed can do at the running back position (laughs) - the holes get bigger, you don't have to open up as a big a hole, they can get around the end a little bit faster. That was a blow for us when Dickie got hurt. It was a blow for us when he moved over to offense but it kind of killed us when he went out.

After the season you were selected to play in the North-South Shrine Game - what was that experience like?

That was fun. I played on the South team and we actually won the game, 7-6, another defensive struggle. The North scored late in the game and went for two and I broke up the pass, that was kind of fun.

You were drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs after your career at USC. Did you go to camp with them?

Back then they had mini-camps and we went out once a month. I guess in started in April and went for four months. I went to the four mini-camps and they cut me after that. They said I was too small and too slow.

They had a pretty talented defense at that time.

Oh yeah, that was the start of the bump-and-run coverage and they started that and had a very good defense. They weren't but two or three years out of the Super Bowl then, they still had Lenny Dawson.

Is there a single play or moment from your career that stands out in your memory?

The punt return against Clemson, of course. I usually remember the bad things, they stick in my mind better than the good things. At Florida State in 1968 I was fielding punts and I dropped a punt inside the ten-yard line and they recovered. Then, it might have been the very next play, I intercepted a pass and got it back. That was redemption there.

A former player from the early 1980s told me the best question to ask was around nicknames - did you have a nickname? Who had the best nickname on the team?

I think everybody had a nickname - Sleepy, Weedy, Forty, Maggott. Bob Perry, he was Maggott. Dobie for Paul Gillis. Shaky - John King. I think everybody had a nickname, except me.

Who were your roommates at Carolina?

My freshman year I roomed with Eddie Bolton because we were from the same town. Then I roomed with Ken Walkup for two years. Ken was a real smart guy. He was unusual but real smart, an engineer. Then I roomed with Rusty Ganas for a semester, Al Usher for a semester and then Bill Boyte for my last year.

Which, if any, of your former teammates do you keep in touch with?

Well, Bill Boyte and I played golf today. The guys in town, we're pretty close. We have a group that gets together for lunch once a month, we go eat barbecue

together. There's maybe a dozen that go. Some of the coaches go, John Menger, Pride Ratterree, though he's not in good health. Dick Weldon I think has been once or twice. There's another group that goes to dinner on Wednesday nights. We stay pretty close. The guys in town are pretty good about that.

Was there a Gamecock player (or players) you played with, who due to injuries or other factors, could have been a big impact player but wasn't able to make the contribution their talent level warranted?

I think Ken Walkup could've been a great player. He could've played professional baseball. He was a pretty good athlete and real fast. He fumbled a couple of times in key situations and they just never gave him another chance. Kinda like Bob Miranda; never did know what Bob was going to do. He was a real, real good running back but he might turn around and reverse his field and run back 30 yards. He'd make spectacular plays but then he may lose 30 yards too. He was a character. Eddie Bolton blitzed Florida State for a touchdown in that '68 game, he just blew by everybody. Suggs laid a perfect pass into him. He also broke his leg and he never did play after that. He played baseball. We had some players that I thought could play. Jimmy Cleckler could've helped us out at running back. He broke his back in the Shrine Bowl and never did live up to his potential the way he could have. He's still in pain (from the injury). A lot of guys got hurt and you don't know what they could've done if they'd have been healthy.

You were part of a pretty talented secondary - Bo Davies, Jimmy Nash, Dickie Harris. Anything stand out to you as you think back about that group?

They were pretty good athletes. They were all good athletes. Bo played basketball as a freshman. Harris probably could've played basketball. They were just good athletes, they could do anything. We played a high school defense against pro offenses. To do as well as we did is just remarkable. I look back and I don't see how we did it. I played free safety 8 yards off the ball. Linebackers play 8 yards off the ball. My senior year they moved Bo to free safety and moved me to strong safety. Strong safety played 5 yards off the ball. I was 160 pounds but I think was third on the team in tackles, and those weren't pass receptions. Those were at the line of scrimmage. We just had some great players.

You had Rusty Ganas and John LeHeup who played pro.

Rusty was my roommate for a semester and he went on to play with the Colts. We had big players too for the time. We had Jimmy Poston who was pushing 300, Danny Dyches, the center - Danny wouldn't get on the scales. Nobody knew how much he weighed. He would come in and write down 275. Danny was 300. Rick Hipkins, he was about 275. We had probably the biggest line in the nation. These were some good athletes too. Dietzel, when he came in, his first recruiting class, he just swept the Shrine Bowl. I think we had 18 Shrine Bowlers from South Carolina and 3 or 4 from North Carolina. We had some good athletes and they were some big guys too.

How would you describe what you're doing now to interested Gamecock fans?

I'm an asset manager for Edens and Avant. We own and operate 150 shopping centers up and down the East Coast, all the way up to Massachusetts. To make a generalization, I manage shopping centers.

How would you like to be remembered by Carolina fans and former teammates?

I'd like to be remembered as somebody who gave one hundred percent on every play, that was a team player and never gave up. Being as small as I was, I couldn't give up (laughs). I'd rather be remembered as a player that gave one hundred and ten percent on every play than anything else.

Tyler Hellams' Career Stats												
					Solo	Ast	Tkl	Int	KOR	Avg	PR	Avg
1968	DB	5-10	158	So	62	22	84	6	3	14.3	24	8.9
1969	DB	5-11	166	Jr	2	0	2	0	1	18.0		
1970	DB	5-11	166	Jr	30	30	60	3	1	3.0		
1971	DB	5-11	163	Sr	33	22	65	4				