

PLAYERS

PLAYERS; 2 BROTHERS, 2 PATTERNS



By Malcolm Moran
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On those special Friday nights at the University of Iowa, the night before the Hawkeyes play, Ronnie Harmon can sit in his dormitory room and listen to the noise of an autumn ritual, the start of the big-time football weekend.

He is a freshman wingback, a long way from home. A child of Queens, less than a year out of Bayside High School, he said he was startled at first when complete strangers said hello as they passed along the street. When Harmon first arrived in Iowa City, the people were just being friendly. Now, they are saying hello to a football hero. "People are coming up to me and asking for my autograph," he said, and laughed.

On most nights in Ithaca, N.Y., Derrick Harmon, Ronnie's older brother and a junior tailback at Cornell, has more important things to worry about. "Football doesn't rate that high on my priority chart," Derrick said.

The chart was constructed three years ago when he chose an Ivy League education over football scholarship possibilities at Syracuse and Rutgers. Derrick's priorities list football well behind maintaining his grade-point average of more than 3.4 (out of 4.0) in electrical engineering.

Ronnie and Derrick Harmon come from the same home and they play the same game, but they are searching for different goals. "He wants to get a job and good grades, and just play football," Ronnie, a computer science major, said of his older brother. "I'm interested in college and academics, but he wants to excel more. I just want to excel more in football."

Derrick gained 142 yards and scored three touchdowns in Cornell's victory over the Merchant Marine Academy last Saturday, its first victory in seven games this season. Ronnie caught two passes in his game. The first, a 36-yard gain, led to Iowa's first touchdown. The second, an 8-yard touchdown pass near the end of the third quarter, was the decisive play in a 14-13 victory over Illinois.

Ronnie Harmon was an important reason why a goal post was torn down in Iowa City. "I never saw that before," he said. "We could hardly get off the field. People were just going crazy. I mean, wow. I never saw so many people in my life."

Over the telephone, the feeling sounded intoxicating. The thought has occurred to Derrick that the feeling could prove to be dangerous. "A lot of high school students go in with the idea of having a respectable degree and playing football," Derrick said. "But in reality, it doesn't happen often. They get caught up in the glory. So many young people are under an illusion. The coaches are supposed to be humanitarians, trying to help you. But I wonder, are they really helping you?"

When Derrick was a high school senior, playing on a city championship team, he resented the fact that he had to miss class time to talk to recruiters. "They would come to my home and sort of demand an answer in their favor," Derrick said. "Well? Are you going to come?" Some would stay four or five hours, talking in circles, and I'd say, 'It's time for me to go to bed.' "

Ronnie was more heavily recruited than Derrick. And Kevin Harmon, a senior quarterback at Bayside this season, has been considered the best athlete of the three.

"I'm concerned about both my brothers," Derrick said. "My parents realize that also. That's one of my main reasons for playing football."

His participation, he said, is a statement to his brothers that it is possible to play on Saturdays and study from Monday through Friday. "I hope the meaning is getting across," Derrick said. "I called home and talked to Kevin and I said, 'How's school going?' He said, 'All right. I'm passing chemistry.' What does that mean? It doesn't mean, I got an A. That hurts me."

Although he played quarterback at Bayside, Derrick insisted on playing running back at Cornell because of the added time demands that quarterbacks face. "That's day-in, day-out football," he said. "Even here."

At the start of summer training camp in his sophomore season, Derrick did not appear for the first seven days. He had chosen Cornell because he wanted to avoid the academic conflicts where football is a business, but he discovered that even the Ivy League had more of an emphasis than he expected.

So Derrick told his brothers he would not play football. "No one seemed happy at home at the idea," he said. "So I thought I might as well go back and play. The one thing that made me want to come back had to be my brothers."

This year, Ronnie had a different problem. After choosing Iowa over six other strong football programs, he was told there was a chance he would be redshirted and would not play. The plan changed when the Hawkeyes needed speed at the wingback position. "They asked me if I wanted to switch," Ronnie said, "really telling me they were going to switch me."

He does not consider himself a wingback. "I was so upset, I couldn't even think straight," Ronnie said. He wondered, for a while, if his choice had been the right one. "I feel comfortable here now," Ronnie said. "I'm not homesick or nothing. You don't have



time to be homesick when you're playing football."

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