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He even enjoyed practice

By DAVE SOCIER

If H. Cosell were doing this piece, it might go something like: "Number 46...Washington Redskins...Frank Grant ...wide receiver out of Southern Colorado State...a 13th-round draft choice in 1972...nobody knew who he was...not the greatest speed around and some say not the greatest hands...but this kid has the guts...showed up in top shape for camp four years ago...he could run all day and, well, why not. He was also a track star at Southern—make that an NAIA All-American in the long jump...ran until the veterans let him have his day while they rested...grabbed the eye Redskins coach George Allen...but Allen had a plethora of great ends and Grant wound up on the taxi squad for a year...then in 1973 he made it on the specialty teams, but saw little time from scrimmage...then it was special teams and parttime deep threat...in 1975 it was found veteran Charley Taylor ran the short routes better now and Roy Jefferson couldn't get his job back from Grant after sustaining an injury...Frank Grant, his perseverance, his guts, his maturation may give Allen thought for a triple wide setup...More about that later."

What're you doing for chow Monday night? If it's Sunday leftovers, forget it and join the dinner crowd at the Sangre de Cristo Arts and Conference Center honoring the athletes and coaches at the University of Southern Colorado.

To me it's "Harry's Dinner"—as in athletic director Harry Simmons, one of my favorite war horses. Attendance by anyone who has anything to do with the USC jock scene is required. They'll have everything but communion.

I'm going for three reasons. 1, They gave me "comps." 2, Has the male chauvinist Booster Club finally recognized the woman athlete at the school? 3, To hear "Number 46...Washington Redskins...Frank Grant," the main speaker.

In May of 1968 I started working at these newspapers and in September Grant came to then Southern Colorado State College from Newark, N.J. He was destined to be a two-time all-conference end in football, NAIA All-American in the long jump and twice winner of the Edward E. Kaufman Award as USC's outstanding athlete.

We grew together for four years as he played and I covered the tribe athletic scene. He wasn't then nor is he now physically impressive at 5-11, 181. But in action, he was a speedy giant.

For the first couple of years the football staff toyed with him as a defensive back, kick return specialist while he did not become an offensive player per se until the 1970 season.

He caught 11 passes total those first two years, his biggest play coming on defense against Adams State. That was a pass interception lugged 60 yards late in the game to set up a 12-10 win.

When Grant went to offense exclusively his track reputation came in handy. Often he was double-teamed going deep. One-on-one he was given a wide berth, usually 10-to-12 yards by enemy cornerbacks. Deep he usually took such a crowd the smart thing to do was throw under the coverage. And SC did.

As a senior during the 1971 season Frank caught a school record 11 passes in each the Western State and Northern Colorado games. His scintillating 26-yard TD on an end-around vs. Northern in '71 was the outstanding play of an outstanding game.

I remember interviewing him afterward only to be stopped in mid-sentence. He pointed out my sweater was buttoned unevenly and laughed like hell.

But that's the kind of guy he was—fun, jovial. He even enjoyed practice, a rare mental state. "This came with his makeup," says USC track coach Jim Blasing. "Frank could make distasteful things bearable. Outwardly, he will never die from an ulcer. He can relax, turn that on just like he could a highly competitive spirit if need be."

He left Blasing with a school record 24-10 in the long jump, as a member of the USC 440-yard relay team that still holds the school standard of 44.5. He ran in the 100, 220, threw the javelin, was in the long jump and ran on the 440 and mile relay teams. "He got the hell worked out of him," says Blasing.

Now he is doing PR work for the Redskins in the offseason, his home in Reston, Va. During the "on season" he snared 41 passes for 776 yards and eight TDs, one 96 yards and a score.

It'll be good to see him again. And Joyce, make sure my buttons are all straight.□