Work to make himself eligible pays reward for Baron, Hokies

BY STEVE CARLSON
STAFF WRITER

Jim Baron was patient. Saturday, it paid off.

The backup defensive tackle had attempted to enroll at Virginia Tech last fall, but as a transfer from Triton Junior College in River Grove, Ill., he fell short of the credits required to be admitted to school. So he enrolled at New River Community College and worked to become eligible, which he did in time to play spring ball with the Hokies.

Almost two years after playing at Triton, where he was the team's most valuable player, Baron returned to live action Saturday in Tech's opener against Arkansas State. The 6-foot-4, 258-pounder recorded three sacks totaling 17 yards, had two quarterback hurries and finished with six tackles.

"Watching him on each and every play on video, I was impressed," Hokies coach Frank Beamer said. "He showed some real quickness there, and he's throwing guys around. I thought he had a very good football game. He's going to be a successful guy. He's made of the right stuff."

YOUTH MOVEMENT: The No. 21 Hokies started nine sophomores against Arkansas State, and six true freshman played. Only six seniors were on the opening-day two-deep chart, compared with 23 freshmen and sophomores.

The true freshman who played the most was Chesapeake's Tony Morrison, who played 25 snaps at whip linebacker, recording two tackles.

CONFERENCE MUSINGS: The league opened the first full week of the season by going 5-3, but the most noteworthy performances came by the losers.

While league favorites Miami and Virginia Tech were drubbing weak teams at home, Boston College opened the season on the road against No. 5 Michigan and led early in Dan Henning's debut before losing, 34-26, in front of 105,936 at Michigan Stadium.

Meanwhile, Syracuse and Pittsburgh — projected to be a middle-of-the-pack team and a bottom feeder, respectively — opened at home against nationally ranked teams. Syracuse, trying to rebound from 1993's 6-4-1 debacle, lost, 30-29, to No. 16 Oklahoma on a field goal with 11 seconds left. Pitt fell to No. 19 Texas, 30-28, after failing to convert a two-point conversion with 36 seconds remaining.

HURRICANE BLOWS TOWN: Miami backup quarterback Chris Walsh, the brother of former Hurricane and current Chicago Bears quarterback Steve Walsh, has withdrawn from school and headed north to Minnesota.

Walsh, a redshirt sophomore, was regarded as a better prospect than his brother. But he had dropped to fourth on the Hurricanes' depth chart behind senior starter Frank Costa, junior Ryan Collins and true freshman Ryan Clement.

Walsh was the Gatorade National High School Player of the Year and a first-team All-American according to Parade, USA Today, Super-Prep and ESPN Scholastic Sports coming out of high school in St. Paul, Minn.

Walsh will receive a scholarship from Minnesota if he meets all the necessary academic requirements.

"I'm not upset at anybody on the Miami staff," Walsh told the Miami Herald. "It's just the best decision for me to go somewhere else and play. It has been a difficult situation."

DORSETT REVISITED: On Tony Dorsett Day at Pitt Stadium on Saturday, tailback Curtis Martin set a Big East rushing record with 251 yards against Texas. But the total ranks seventh on the school's list of top rushing performances, with Dorsett's 303 yards against Notre Dame in 1975 leading the way. The Big East is only four years old, so records can be deceiving.

QUICK HITS: West Virginia punter Todd Sauerbrun's two-game average is 52.5 yards per kick, and he has set Big East records this season for longest punt (90 yards) and single-game average (60.1). The bad news for the Mountaineers is that he already has punted 17 times. . . . Virginia Tech has been ranked in the last eight Associated Press polls, dating back to Nov. 16. . . . Syracuse linebacker Dan Conley and Miami defensive lineman Rusty Medearis both returned to action last week after being granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA because of injuries. . . . Miami returns to the scene of its greatest embarrassment Saturday when it plays Arizona State at Sun Devil Stadium, also the site of last season's 29-0 Fiesta Bowl loss to Arizona.