Bright colored confetti littered Dolphin Stadium as the Indianapolis Colts accepted the Vince Lombardi trophy on Sunday, February 4, as they defeated the Chicago Bears 29-17 in Super Bowl XLI. In the sea of Colts’ blue and white on the field there was a trace of maroon and gold celebrating the championship as well.

Former Salisbury University Head Athletic Trainer (HAT) Hunter Smith and SU graduate Dave Walston ’87 were now living their dream of becoming Super Bowl champions. Smith, the HAT for the Colts, and Walston, an assistant to Smith, had been close before, but on that rainy night in Miami they were part of history and a Super Bowl team.

No one was more excited for Smith and Walston then SU HAT Pat Lamboni who watched the game 1,100 miles away in Salisbury. For Lamboni it was a chance to see his mentor (Smith) and one of his first students (Walston) achieve this athletic milestone.

“I am proud of them for winning the world championship,” said Lamboni.

Smith, 57, started the Salisbury Athletic Training Education Program (ATEC) in 1972. The Salisbury, MD, native spent 10 years at SU as the HAT and as an assistant professor in physical education. Smith turned over the keys to Lamboni when he left in 1982 for the College of William and Mary. One year later Smith joined the Colts and since 1984 has been the HAT for Indianapolis.

“Hunter is a constant professional,” said Lamboni. “Athletic training is a profession that he loves and it is a profession that he is deeply devoted to.”

Strangely enough it was Smith who recruited Walston to come to SU for athletic training.

“I picked Salisbury because of its reputation it had as a good teachers college,” said Walston.

Walston, 43, learned under Lamboni and met up with Smith during several summer internships with the Colts in the mid-1980’s. The Denton, MD, native, joined the Colts full time in 1995 after serving several stints as a HAT at the Division II level including a stop at Bowie State where he worked with current SU football coach Sherman Wood.

“I followed Dave through his years at Salisbury with Pat,” said Smith. “I think he brings a great deal of comfort to our players but also challenges them. He is a great addition to our staff.”

The two Eastern Shore natives do make return visits once or twice a year where they like to catch-up on hunting, fishing and crabbing. Without a doubt their next trip home they will be wearing something a little more bright and heavy on one of their fingers, a Super Bowl ring. A fitting symbol of all the hard work these former Sea Gulls did for SU which later led to NFL greatnesses. They helped to lay the foundation for future SU athletic trainers.

“That is what makes Hunter proud. The amount of good, quality athletic trainers we have turned out. It has never been a factory. We turn out the best possible athletic trainer,” said Lamboni. “It is a team approach here. That is what has made our program great.”

Now the SU ATEP can add the title Super Bowl champions to the list.
First Hunter Smith Scholarship Awarded

Junior Pam Staso has a long way to go to match the success that Hunter Smith has achieved during his legendary athletic training career, but because of Smith and the generosity of others, Staso will have the opportunity to live her dreams.

The Bel Air, MD, native is the first-ever Hunter Smith Scholarship recipient, who received the award in 2006. The scholarship will help Staso for the final four semesters she has left at SU.

“It is definitely a great honor,” said Staso. “It is also a great responsibility. I have a lot of expectations to look up to.”

Staso, 20, was one of the athletic trainers for women’s lacrosse in spring 2007 and is also an officer on the Athletic Training Club.

Even though Staso has never met Smith she understands how important he was in starting the Athletic Training Education Program at SU.

“For more information about the Hunter Smith Scholarship, please visit the SU athletic training Web site at www.salisbury.edu/hpehp/atep.

Pride And Perseverance

by Gary Cucchi ’97

It’s amazing how fast time passes. The memories of 10 years ago are as vivid and crisp as yesterday. They’re also bittersweet because in 1997 the Salisbury men’s basketball team came within two shots of attaining a dream—the NCAA Division III Final Four.

Losing in the quarterfinals was a disappointment, and yet the success of that team is heartwarming. Individual stats and honors placed second to the over-riding goal of winning. Each day all 15 players gave of themselves to achieve a greater team goal, winning.

Less than a year earlier, the program was devastated with the sudden death of one of its greatest, Dameon Ross. The 1996-97 club dedicated its season to his memory and went on to reach the same heights as Dameon’s 1991-92 team.

The record books might show that we “came up just short,” but our sheer determination is what people remember. We showed guts and heart. We hustled, pulled together and played with a level of intensity that no opponent could match.

On a cold snowy March night in 1997, in Rochester, NY, we fell just short of our dreams. We came up just short for Coach Ward Lambert, for Dameon Ross and for every other player who previously donned our jerseys.

In every loss there is a win, and even in losing, there is solace. We look back at a legacy of success built on a foundation of hard work and dedication to a team goal. I’m proud to have been a part of that team and I hope that every SU team strives with the same passion and determination. I’m sure every one of my 14 fellow teammates feels precisely the same way.

Pam Staso

Dameon Ross