

2012 FOOTBALL 2013
PREVIEW



DTH/BROOKELYN RILEY

Ushering in the Fedora Era

By Brandon Moree
Sports Editor

Smart. Fast. Physical.
It's the motto, the creed of new North Carolina football head coach Larry Fedora, and it's everywhere.
It's been drilled into the minds of the Tar Heels on both sides of the ball, and it has been on the tips of their tongues all summer long.
Saturday, on the green and blue grass at Kenan Stadium, that mentality will take a visible, physical and public form against the Phoenix from Elon.

"When we walk off that field Saturday, that's what I want to be able to say," Fedora said. "That we played smart, we played fast and we played physical — the rest of it will take care of itself if we can handle those three things."
Fedora, who is the third Tar Heel head coach in as many seasons, brings a new style of football to Chapel Hill. And it is certainly fast.
Quarterback Bryn Renner and the Tar Heel offense will

SEE FEDORA, PAGE 2

Boyd, Highsmith head young corps

By Michael Lananna
Senior Writer

If everything had gone according to plan, Jheranie Boyd and Erik Highsmith wouldn't have played in 2009. They certainly didn't expect to.
At the time, Boyd and Highsmith were just about to begin their North Carolina careers. They were true freshmen trying to move up in a crowded depth chart, and with several veteran wide receivers blocking their path, it seemed unlikely that they would be able to advance.
But as the season neared, injuries cut into the Tar Heels' depth at wide receiver. Suddenly, Boyd and Highsmith were plucked from their roles on UNC's scout team and thrust into practice with the starting squad — an abrupt change of plans.
And as far as Highsmith is concerned, that change was for the better.
"Just getting thrown in the fire so quick, I think that helped me out these past couple of years," said Highsmith, who is now entering his senior season. "Now I'm just telling the freshmen, 'You never



DTH FILE PHOTO

Erik Highsmith rushes past linebacker Preston Brown in last season's 14-7 win over Louisville. Highsmith had 59 yards that game.

know when your chance is going to come, because it happened to me."
With this year's UNC team sporting a new coaching staff, a new offense and a thin group of wide receivers, its freshmen will also likely be thrown into the fire sooner rather than later.
And fortunately for them, they'll be able to lean on two seniors who have been there before.

New beginnings

When Highsmith thinks back to his first

practice at North Carolina, he remembers how fast everything seemed to move — how he felt like a deer in the headlights.
Three years later, with a new head coach in Larry Fedora, he felt that way again.
"The first day of spring, it was just chaos," Highsmith said. "It was just the intensity of practice was different ... Special teams, offense, defense, individual periods — we were running everywhere."
Having spent the past three seasons in a pro-style offense,

SEE RECEIVERS, PAGE 2

Wake's offensive line, secondary lead way

By James Pike
Staff Writer

Consistency was a major problem for Wake Forest last season.
The Demon Deacons beat eventual bowl-winners N.C. State and Florida State, but lost to powerhouses Clemson and Notre Dame by a combined 10 points.
But that same team lost to Virginia Tech by 21, to Vanderbilt by 34 and to North Carolina by 25.
This season's team, led by junior quarterback Tanner Price, will look to eliminate those inconsistencies and build on a season that earned them a place in their first bowl game since 2008.
"Since I've been here we've been a young team," Price said. "Each year we get more and more confident, and it allows us to play better as we're more comfortable with other."
Price and backs Michael Campanaro and Josh Harris will lead the offense.
Campanaro, who had 73 receptions for 833 yards last season, will be a key offensive component, while Harris will attempt to rebound from an

injury-riddled 2011.
"(Head coach Jim Grobe) wants to get to the point where it's a balanced attack," Price said. "I know we struggled at times to run the ball last year, and I think that was the emphasis he put on our offense — to become better at running the ball."
To accomplish this task, the offensive line will need to gel quickly. Four of the five starters from last year's team graduated.
But Price is not concerned about his new lineup's lack of experience.
"I feel really confident in this line," Price said. "We got a new offensive line coach who did a great job with them in the spring and really got them ready."
The offense may score the points, but it will be the defense that carries Wake Forest this season.
One of its strengths will be the secondary, led by redshirt sophomore Merrill Noel.
Noel earned Freshman All-America honors in 2011 and was named the ACC Defensive Rookie of the Year.
On the defensive line, Nikita Whitlock will be a player to watch. He looks to build on his second-team All-ACC season of 2011.

QUICK HITS:
WAKE FOREST

- Head coach: Jim Grobe
- 2011 record: 6-6 (5-3)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: Second place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: Fourth place
- Date with North Carolina: Sept. 8

"I figured if I got a little bigger, a little stronger, a little faster — I'd be better," Whitlock said. "So that's what I did. I worked on all aspects of my game."
In 2011, Whitlock was one of WFU's most disruptive playmakers with a team-high 14 tackles-for-loss and 3.5 sacks.
With these weapons on his roster, Grobe's main concern will be to keep them all healthy.
"I feel great about our front people — it's just a matter of not getting anybody banged up," Grobe said. "It's a matter of being lucky. If we stay healthy, we've got a front seven that can get the job done."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

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RECEIVERS

FROM PAGE 1

Highsmith and fellow senior Boyd entered camp much like freshmen. They needed time to adjust to Fedora's no-huddle, fast-tempo spread offense, but they needed to do so quickly.

That's because at the moment, Boyd and Highsmith are the only two starting receivers with receptions to their names.

Not only will they carry a heavy workload this season, but their younger teammates will be looking to them for guidance as well.

"(Highsmith) and Boyd are two guys who have been there before, and they've been in a great system before ... They have a great foundation," said Gunter Brewer, UNC's new wide receivers coach. "You have to look to somebody to show you the way, and they're our way right now."

For the most part, they've adjusted to the new offense fairly quickly. Highsmith said he now knows it like the back of his hand, and the transition was a relatively smooth one for Boyd as well.

"Those three years in the

pro-style stuff just taught me how to get concepts," Boyd said. "So learning this offense wasn't too hard."

Now, Boyd and Highsmith will need to ensure their teammates learn it, too.

Leading the offense

Bryn Renner might be UNC's quarterback, but he won't be the only one calling signals this season.

Because Fedora's offense doesn't huddle, it's crucial that everyone on the field communicates and stays in tune with the game plan.

If one receiver runs his route incorrectly, it could jeopardize a play or — depending on the situation — even a game.

So for UNC's offense to run effectively, Renner will need to rely on Highsmith and Boyd to interpret the plays and direct on-field traffic.

"They're really the leaders of this wide receiver group and basically the whole offense," Renner said. "So they have a lot of responsibility as far as getting the young guys where they need to go."

As UNC enters the season,

"But I guess it's just my turn now. It's me and J-Boyd's turn."

Erik Highsmith,
UNC wide receiver

Boyd and Highsmith are joined on the depth chart by freshman Quinshad Davis and three sophomores: Sean Tapley, Mark McNeill and Roy Smith — a walk-on track athlete.

It's not the most well-traveled group, but what those players lack in experience, they make up for in aptitude.

"They've made tremendous growth," Highsmith said. "On the first day of training camp, they were like deer in the headlights, too. But they're coming along, getting the offense, just getting more comfortable with themselves in the offense and their role."

And in a sense, they're following in the footsteps of their senior leaders.

A new number one

As freshmen battling for playing time, Boyd and Highsmith could have easily become rivals three years ago.

Instead, they were called "Twin Towers" by their teammates because of how much time they spent together.

Sure, they competed, but they used competition as a means to drive each other and to improve themselves.

They knew a day would come when they would be looked at as the highly vaunted veterans — like the Brandon Tate and Hakeem Nickses before them.

For the past two seasons, that role has been occupied by Dwight Jones. But now, it's theirs for the taking.

"Every year someone else steps up to be the No. 1 guy," Highsmith said. "And you know, Dwight was a hell of a player. I respect him. He taught me a lot ... But I guess it's just my turn now."

"It's me and J-Boyd's turn."

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2012 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
Sept. 1	vs. Elon	Chapel Hill, N.C.	12:30 PM
Sept. 8	at Wake Forest	Winston-Salem, N.C.	3:00 PM
Sept. 15	at Louisville	Louisville, Ky.	3:30 PM
Sept. 22	vs. East Carolina	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA
Sept. 29	vs. Idaho	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA
Oct. 6	vs. Virginia Tech	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA
Oct. 13	at Miami	Miami Gardens, Fla.	TBA
Oct. 20	at Duke	Durham, N.C.	TBA
Oct. 27	vs. N.C. State	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA
Nov. 10	vs. Georgia Tech	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA
Nov. 15	at Virginia	Charlottesville, Va.	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 24	vs. Maryland	Chapel Hill, N.C.	TBA

FEDORA

FROM PAGE 1

line up in the spread — primarily from the shotgun formation — this season and are looking to run more plays per game than ever before.

Fedora has warned fans that if they leave their seats during games this year, they are likely to miss a UNC touchdown.

"We want to run 75 to 80 plays a game — that's our goal, and the quicker we snap the ball, the more plays we can run. So that's our mantra," Renner said.

"When the ball gets down, we want to snap it as quickly as possible no matter what it is."

On defense, things will also look much different than under previous regimes. Fedora's staff brings a physical 4-2-5 defensive alignment that features two unique positions.

Those new spots are appropriately named the bandit and the ram — projecting the physical and aggressive style Fedora wants.

"I'm very excited to play in this new defense we've got," senior linebacker Kevin Reddick said. "It's a very attacking defense, and I really can't wait to start playing in games."

"They've got me coming from everywhere this year, so it's going to be fun to see how it turns out, and I'm just ready to play."

And when it comes to playing smart, those responsibilities befall the self-proclaimed former gunslinger Renner.

"The two things I talk to (Renner) most about are taking care of the football and managing the game. That's it. Those are the only things that I want him to worry about," Fedora said.

"If he does those two things, we'll be fine. The offense is only going to go as far as he'll take us or as far as he's willing to take us."

The outline is clear and has been since day one. The days of a slow, pro-style offense are gone. Renner noted the

toughest adjustment stems from the increased conditioning required to sprint on to the next play as soon as the last one ends rather than breaking the huddle with 15 seconds left on the play clock and walking to the line of scrimmage.

Though Fedora's strategy has been highly publicized and the expectations are set, the Tar Heels' identity is still yet to be determined.

Fedora, who says he's never comfortable with anything at this point in the season, will have a better idea of what the team's identity will be after he sees it in real game time.

"We haven't spent all of our time focusing on Elon — our focus has been on North Carolina," Fedora said.

"Our focus has been on the Tar Heels and who we are because we don't have an identity yet. We won't have an identity until after the game Saturday."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

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Yellow Jackets want strong finish

By Marilyn Payne
Staff Writer

Georgia Tech won its first six games last season.

The team even peaked at No. 12 in the rankings, but then the road got bumpy.

“Complacency set in after we started (last) season so smooth,” quarterback Tevin Washington said. “We hadn’t lost in six games. We felt like we were going to go (to Virginia) and take it. We



learned a lot from that.”

Ga. Tech fell to Virginia 24-21 on Oct. 15.

It was the first of five losses that came in 2011’s last seven games.

Amidst losses, two wins were enough for the Yellow Jackets to still finish 8-5 overall and 5-3 in the ACC.

But for a better 2012 record, the team needs to improve on special teams and its ability to close out the season.

And this season brings a new challenge, too.

Ga. Tech opens Saturday in Blacksburg, Va. against ACC Coastal Division rival Va. Tech.

“I think there’s positives and negatives both ways,” Ga. Tech coach Paul Johnson said. “It’s going to be a huge game and has been for our division. But there’s a ton of football left after that game, it’s not do or die.”

That mentality of having a ‘ton of football left’ helped Ga. Tech claim a bid to the Hyundai Sun Bowl last season, even after the drop in momentum, to give the program its 15th straight bowl game.

Seniors Washington and guard Omoregie Uzzi return to lead the Yellow Jackets’ triple-option offense, which finished last season ranked



DTH/FILE PHOTO

Sophomore T.J. Thorpe tries to shake Yellow Jacket safety Isaiah Johnson in last year’s 35-28 loss at Bobby Dodd Stadium.

second nationally in rushing. With Washington and Uzzi at the helm, Ga. Tech hopes to extend the bowl streak to 16.

Junior linebacker Jeremiah Attaochu will head a young defensive squad working toward the same goal.

“There’s a greater comfort level,” Attaochu said. “(The guys) know the technique and what coach is looking for. A lot of guys have taken that into the offseason, gotten in shape and ready to play in this defense.”

Five defensive starting spots will be filled with new faces, including the hole left by leading tackler Julian Burnett, a senior who will not play for health reasons.

In addition to the new defensive faces, Ga. Tech will welcome special teams coach David Walkosky to its staff.

“He’s done a great job in motivating our guys to want to be on special teams,” Johnson said. “They’re excited about his

QUICK HITS: GEORGIA TECH

- Head coach: Paul Johnson
- 2011 record: 8-4 (5-3)
- 2011 Coastal Division finish: Third place
- Projected Coastal Division finish: Second place
- Date with North Carolina: Nov. 10

energy and enthusiasm.”

Ga. Tech is one of few teams nationally that will enter the season with a special teams coach. To hire Walkosky, Johnson sacrificed an offensive coaching position, so he’s watching to see if the trade works in the long run.

“The proof is in the pudding,” he said. “We’ll see when we start playing if we’re better.”

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

Eagles trying to bounce back in 2012

By Emily Fedewa
Staff Writer

Boston College has a long way to go to prove its worth in the ACC this season.

The Eagles enter the 2012 campaign coming off their worst year since 1995. In both seasons, the team posted a



record of just 4-8. It was just their second season without a bowl invitation since 1998.

That poor showing was due to BC’s inability to get things going early in the season.

Only one of those four wins came in the first half of the season, as the Eagles went 1-5 to start the year. Their record of 3-3 in the second half of the season, though, showed some improvement.

“We just came into the whole season just slow, too slow,” defensive tackle Kaleb Ramsey said. “I think toward the end of the season we learned how to persevere, how to practice, and how to attack.”

But a slow start doesn’t account for all the problems.

Plenty of other issues contributed to the team’s tough season, including their youth — the team lost 18 starters last year.

“I hate to deal with the problems because it sounds like excuses,” head coach Frank Spaziani said. “But we had injuries, we had coaching changes, we had a young team.”

Some of those young players will have to use last year’s experiences to step up and fill some very big shoes.

Among others, the Eagles lost All-American linebacker Luke Kuechly to the NFL draft. Kuechly, who holds the school career record for tackles, was selected ninth overall in the draft by the Carolina Panthers.

QUICK HITS: BOSTON COLLEGE

- Head coach: Frank Spaziani
- 2011 record: 4-8 (3-5)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: Fifth place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: Fifth place
- Date with North Carolina: None in 2012

Despite the loss of Kuechly, Ramsey believes the Eagles have the depth to cushion the blow.

“Luke (Kuechly) was a great player for us, and he made a bunch of great plays in our games,” Ramsey said. “But I’m sure the young guys behind him will learn how he did things and take those and apply them to themselves.”

Ramsey also said he believes the defense will have to work to limit its opponents’ rushing numbers and put more pressure on the quarterback.

On the offensive side of the ball, Boston College will have to fill the hole left by the school’s all-time leading rusher, Montel Harris, who was dismissed from the team for breaking team rules.

The 2012 offense will look to impose its own attitude and a faster rhythm on each game.

BC’s offense has also had to adjust to four different offensive systems in the last five years, but senior offensive tackle Emmett Cleary thinks the effects have been blown out of proportion.

“The transition is not as tough as people think,” Cleary said. “I really like the way things have gone, and I’m really excited about this next year.”

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.



DTH/FILE PHOTO

UNC won’t face the Eagles for the third straight season. The Tar Heels last matched up with Boston College in November 2009 and won 31-13.

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A DEFENDER’S DECISION



DTH FILE PHOTO

Senior linebacker leads by example

Back for his senior year, Kevin Reddick takes pride in being a leader.

By Kelly Parsons
Senior Writer

Kevin Reddick had a big decision to make. On March 12, almost 21 months after the NCAA launched a paralyzing investigation into the North Carolina football program, it laid down the hammer, instituting scholarship reductions, fines and a one-year postseason ban. Reddick and the rest of UNC’s rising seniors were granted permission to leave and play right away at another Division I program, a privilege typically not afforded to athletes once they sign their names on the dotted line. If he stayed, the linebacker would never again play in a bowl game, the dream of competing for an ACC champi-

onship would be dashed. If he left, he’d forsake the defensive unit in which he’d invested three years of his life. For Reddick, it was a lot to consider.

‘Something new’

A three-star recruit from New Bern High School, Reddick led the Bears to the 4-AA North Carolina state title during his senior year. At fullback, Reddick’s two touchdowns earned him offensive MVP honors of the championship game that snapped Independence’s seven-year state-title streak. Two months later, he committed and became part of North Carolina’s 18-man 2008 recruiting class. “When I made my decision to come to North Carolina, it was because of coach (Butch) Davis and his staff,” Reddick said. “It was something new.” Because of academic reasons, Reddick spent six months at Hargrave Military Academy before enrolling at UNC in January 2009. Ever since, he’s been a

reliable fixture for the Tar Heels. Reddick started the final seven games of his freshman campaign. The next season, as his teammates were declared ineligible left and right for transgressions related to the NCAA investigation, Reddick kept his hands clean and was one of only two defensive players to start all 13 games. As a junior last year, he was second on the team with 71 tackles and named captain of the defense. At this point in his career, football comes easily to Reddick. “As you get older, you stop thinking,” he said. “No matter what it is.” But the decision of whether to leave all of that behind didn’t come as naturally.

Where he belonged

It was the opportunity to experience something new that originally attracted Reddick to North Carolina. After careful consideration, Reddick realized he wouldn’t have to leave Chapel Hill to experience that again.



DTH FILE PHOTO

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS STARTERS

OFFENSE

Left Tackle	68 – James Hurst (6-7, 290, Junior)
Left Guard	64 – Jonathan Cooper (6-3, 295, Senior)
Center	60 – Russell Bodine (6-4, 305, Sophomore)
Right Guard	76 – Travis Bond (6-7, 330, Senior)
Right Tackle	73 – Brennan Williams (6-7, 310, Senior)
Tight End	85 – Eric Ebron (6-4, 235, Sophomore)
Quarterback	2 – Bryn Renner (6-3, 215, Junior)
Tailback	26 – Giovanni Bernard (5-10, 205, Sophomore)
Wide Receiver	88 – Erik Highsmith (6-3, 190, Senior)
Wide Receiver	6 – Sean Tapley (6-1, 185, Sophomore)
Wide Receiver	87 – Jheranie Boyd (6-2, 190, Senior)

DEFENSE

Defensive End	95 – Kareem Martin (6-6, 260, Junior)
Defensive Tackle	92 – Sylvester Williams (6-3, 305, Senior)
Nose Tackle	93 – Tim Jackson (6-5, 270, Junior)
Bandit	57 – Dion Guy (6-4, 245, Senior)
Will Linebacker	9 – Travis Hughes (6-2, 230, Sophomore)
Mike Linebacker	48 – Kevin Reddick (6-3, 240, Senior)
Ram	1 – Gene Robinson (5-11, 200, Senior)
Cornerback	4 – Jabari Price (6-0, 195, Junior)
Strong Safety	10 – Tre Boston (6-1, 190, Junior)
Free Safety	11 – Sam Smiley (5-11, 185, Freshman)
Cornerback	7 – Tim Scott (5-11, 190, Sophomore)

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker	11 – Casey Barth (5-11, 190, Senior)
Punter	30 – Tommy Hibbard (5-10, 195, Sophomore)
Deep Snapper	97 – Parker Thomas (6-5, 225, Junior)
Holder	30 – Tommy Hibbard (5-10, 195, Sophomore)
Punt Return	26 – Giovanni Bernard (5-10, 205, Sophomore)



DTH FILE PHOTO

He liked the never-say-die attitude coach Larry Fedora and company brought to the program. But most of all, Reddick couldn’t imagine leaving his teammates behind.

So he decided to stay. “I felt like the defense, I belonged on it,” Reddick said.

In three seasons at UNC, Reddick has sailed through the ups and downs of a program tainted by infractions and constrained by unknowns. In his senior season, Reddick will be led by a third different head coach.

His teammates are quick to value the knowledge that only that kind of experience can garner.

“He’s been through a lot. We look up to him,” tailback Giovanni Bernard said. “Kevin has been really able to help me out, in situations off the field and on the field. If I feel a little pressure, whatever it may be, he’s been right there.”

Reddick is all about making football fun. But when he puts on the light blue and white, he’s got the kind of tunnel vision his superiors expect from someone to which they entrust the success of a team.

That dedication makes Fedora’s job easier. With Reddick on the field, the first-year coach doesn’t need to worry about his defensive unit much. The respect the younger players have for their senior linebacker is enough to keep them in line.

“You can see it in him each and every day,” Fedora said. “He carries himself the way he’s supposed to carry himself. He carries himself as a leader. “If you want to ask, it’s his defense.”

A better man

A stone-faced Reddick sat in the Kenan Football Center on Monday afternoon to address the media, the bright green of the untouched field shone through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows behind him. At the first mention of Saturday’s season-opening game against Elon, he flashed a huge grin.

Just like he was when he started his college career, Reddick is an integral part of something new. He thrives on that.

“We’ve waited a long time for this to be our team,” said quarterback Bryn Renner, describing he and Reddick’s combined leadership. “He’s done a great job for our defense, just kind of getting them motivated every day for practice ... He’s going to be the focal point of that defense.”

Under Fedora’s direction, UNC’s defense has switched from the 4-3 formation to a 4-2-5. The new scheme will feature more blitzes and a faster tempo.

The welcomed changes and his responsibility to help instill them have forced him to not only be a better football player,

“He carries himself as a leader. If you want to ask, it’s his defense.”

Larry Fedora,
North Carolina head football coach

but also a better man, Reddick said.

“That’s very important to me, the coaches putting it in my hands, letting me take over the show and letting me guide the defense in the right way,” Reddick said. “The defense is going to feed off of me ... It puts more hunger in me to make that play.”

Reddick said he’s had a complete grasp of the new scheme all summer. The defense as a whole, he concedes, is operating at about 90 percent, but making strides daily.

There’s a lot of attention surrounding Fedora and the new spread offense. But Reddick refuses to let the defense take a back seat. They’re snatching more takeaways. They’re running at the ball from every direction. Declaring the unit will be fun to watch is a promise Reddick feels comfortable making.

It’s his defense, after all.

Contact the desk editor at
sports@dailytarheel.com.

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Virginia’s 2011 gains on youthful shoulders

By Matthew Cox
Staff Writer

Virginia is coming off its first winning season since 2007, but head coach Mike London will have to replace nearly half of last year's starters in his third season.

Seven starters return on offense, including quarterback Michael Rocco and running back Perry Jones, who led the team with more than 900 rushing yards last season.

"We have a lot of guys that have played in games, but maybe not played downs one through four, so that will be the difference," London said.

Jones will look to become the first Virginia back with more than 1,000 rushing yards in a season since Alvin Pearman in 2004.

Virginia also has five returning defensive starters

but will be without last year's punter and kicker.

"It keeps me up at night," London said. "I'm committed to bringing in a full complement of kickers to find out how good they are."

London said the Cavaliers are a young team, and he expects incoming freshmen to play immediately.

"We're not at the point now where we can have the luxury of redshirting guys," he said. "We're going to need some help from some of these incoming freshmen, and hopefully as we move down the road here we can start redshirting some of these guys like we want to."

The Cavaliers started 4-3 last year and had a four-game conference winning streak before falling to rival Virginia Tech in their last regular-season game.

Had they won, they would have landed a spot in the ACC Championship game. Instead,

they settled for a berth in the Chick-fil-A Bowl, where they lost to Auburn.

"I think the guys respect him so much because he is an example of what it's like to be a man," Jones said about London. "I think that is one of the biggest reasons why we were able to have the season we had last year because guys are fighting for someone that they love."

UVA. opens the season against London's alma mater, Richmond, a team he coached to an FCS Championship before being hired by Virginia.

The game against North Carolina on Nov. 15 will be the only Thursday night game for both teams this season.

North Carolina defeated Virginia 44-10 two years ago in Charlottesville, the first time UNC won at Scott Stadium since 1981. They beat them 28-17 at home last season.

Virginia is improving under London's leadership, and this

QUICK HITS: VIRGINIA

- Head coach: Mike London
- 2011 record: 8-4 (5-3)
- 2011 Coastal Division finish: Second place
- Projected Coastal Division finish: Fourth place
- Date with North Carolina: Nov. 15

year could decide whether the Cavaliers will take the next step: winning their first ACC Championship since 1995.

"We understand that we can't sneak up on anybody this year — the stakes are raised," senior linebacker Steve Greer said. "We have a little bit of a target on our back, so we're going to have to work off that."



DTH FILE PHOTO
Senior wide receiver Jheranie Boyd outpaces Virginia's defense to receive the ball. UNC defeated UVA. in both 2010 and 2011.

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EOE

FSU's legacy drives team

After a disappointing 2011, the Seminoles want redemption.

By Henry Gargan
Assistant Sports Editor

The pressure of belonging to a historically elite program bites both ways for Florida State's football team.

Though the Seminoles, led by head coach Jimbo Fisher, are set to begin the season ranked seventh in the nation, their players and fans know

all too well what it feels like to fall from such a high pedestal. Last season's team

entered the season ranked even higher than this year's — sixth in both polls. Three losses later, Florida State dropped out of the rankings and contention for a BCS bowl bid.

The Seminoles finished 9-4, but were hampered by injuries throughout the season, losing star receiver Rashad Greene for four games. Their 18-14 comeback win against Notre Dame in the Champs Sports Bowl came at the price of several more injuries.

But this year's team hopes that memory, equally lofty expectations and better health will propel them in the other direction.

"It has to be the year," redshirt senior quarterback EJ Manuel said. "I think that will help us as seniors leave a legacy at Florida State. We can say that we helped bring them back to the national championship, we helped put Florida State back where it used to be."

For both Manuel and standout defensive back Brandon Jenkins, college football ends after this season. Jenkins, one of FSU's four preseason All-ACC selections, said that urgency has helped him focus on the minute, yet critical aspects of his game.

"It's just little technique stuff that I missed," he said. "I missed a lot of sacks too. It's just the little things that make you want to go back and make that play again and take control of that situation and make it better."

What FSU missed most last season, though, was consistent play from its offensive line. Last year, Florida State was ranked 110th in pass-rush defense, allowing more than three sacks per game.

But when injuries forced Fisher to use four rookie linemen against Notre Dame, he liked what he saw.

Sophomores Josue Matias and Tre' Jackson, battle-hardened by that experience, will join redshirt sophomore and converted defensive tackle Cameron Erving as new additions to FSU's offensive line.

Ideally, an improved front line will create more offensive opportunities for Manuel through the air. But more critically for the Seminoles, it will open up a running game that, not coincidentally, ranked 112th in the nation last season.

Coupled with FSU's perennially strong defense, this improvement has Fisher excited about, rather than scared of, high expectations for his team.

"I know the guys behind the scenes and know what they've done. I feel very much comfortable in our new leadership. I have confidence in these guys, I really believe it."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

QUICK HITS: FLORIDA STATE

- Head coach: Jimbo Fisher
- 2011 record: 8-4 (5-3)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: Third place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: First place
- Date with North Carolina: None in 2012

Title defense in mind for the boys in Death Valley

By David Adler
Staff Writer

To break down the Clemson football team, just look at the numbers.

Like zero, a number the Tigers could tape to their locker room wall for motivation. It's how many times they've been picked to win the ACC since coach Dabo Swinney took over.

But they have won it with Swinney. Twice.

Or the team could focus on the number 14. That many wins in 2012

would make a perfect season. "Our goal is to win them all. Simple as that," Swinney said. "I don't take a backseat to any team, and I don't back down from any challenges."

Plenty of numbers back up Swinney's confidence. Like 14, which doesn't just stand for a season full of wins. It's also Clemson's preseason national ranking.

Or 10 and two. Those numbers sit on the backs of the

jerseys of first-team All-ACC quarterback Tajh Boyd and first-team All-American wide receiver Sammy Watkins.

Boyd and Watkins led an explosive offense that scored 33.6 points per game in 2011, second in the ACC.

Last year, the offense rolled its way to the number 10 — the Tigers scored more than 30 points in a game 10 times, including a season-high 59 against North Carolina.

The offense also carried Clemson to the 2011 ACC title. The Tigers blew out Virginia Tech 38-10 in the ACC Championship game.

And center Dalton Freeman said it could be even better in 2012.

"Honestly, last season we were a no-huddle, high-tempo team, but we still kind of dragged out some of our plays," Freeman said. "It wasn't until this spring that I really thought we were starting to push the tempo."

Watkins has another number two with him besides the one stitched onto his jersey.

He has been suspended for the season's first two games

QUICK HITS: CLEMSON

- Head coach: Dabo Swinney
- 2011 record: 10-3 (6-2)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: First place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: Second place
- Date with North Carolina: None in 2012

after a May drug arrest.

And Clemson has more numbers to worry about.

Like four, the losses the Tigers took in their final six games last season. All were by at least two touchdowns.

Or 10.5, the number of sacks first-team All-ACC defensive end Andre Branch — who was picked in the second round of the 2012 NFL draft — collected last year.

Or seven, the number of games in which the Tigers allowed 30 points in 2011 — only three fewer times than they scored 30-plus. As a result, Swinney said Clemson simplified its defense for 2012.



DTH FILE/SPENCER HERLONG

Sophomore Giovanni Bernard tries to dodge Clemson defense in last year's 59-38 loss. UNC will not face the Tigers this season.

But most of all, there is 70 — the number of points the Tigers gave up to West Virginia in the Orange Bowl. Clemson lost 70-33.

"Waking up at 5 a.m. in those morning workouts, (the

loss) obviously left a bitter taste in the mouth," Freeman said. "But at the end of the day we have to turn the page."

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Hokies' Thomas comfortable at helm

By Jonathan LaMantia
Staff Writer

Last year, Virginia Tech quarterback Logan Thomas was surrounded by playmakers as he eased into the starting role for the Hokies.

This year, he is the playmaker.



The departures of running back David Wilson, who rushed for 1,709 yards, and wide receivers Jarrett Boykin and Danny Coale, who each tallied more than 700 yards through the air, leave the burden squarely on Thomas' 6-foot-6 260-pound frame.

But coach Frank Beamer, the Football Bowl Subdivision's active leader in career coaching wins, is confident Thomas can lead his unit.

"Last year, we had a situation where he was a new guy and we had a lot of experienced guys around him, and they all are trying to take care of him," Beamer said. "Now, I think he's kind of taking care of the inexperienced guys around him."

This season, Thomas won't need the three weeks he said it took him to get comfortable in the starting role last year.

"I'm pretty confident in myself, and I'm pretty confident in what this team can do," Thomas said. "We have athletes in every position. Even up front in the offensive line, they're athletic."

Redshirt freshman Michael Holmes will assume Wilson's duties at tailback, and as many as six other running backs might receive touches this season.

Beamer compared Holmes' added responsibility with Thomas' last year.

"I think the uncertainty, it's kind of like Logan last year — he hasn't done it, but you know he can," Beamer said.

The Hokies' defense is a different story.

Virginia Tech will return nine starters from a defense that was seventh-best in the country in scoring defense.

Their defense will be key as they attempt to extend their streak of eight consecutive seasons with 10 or more wins, the longest streak in the FBS.

Virginia Tech was able to consistently pressure opposing quarterbacks in 2011 and looks to do the same in 2012 as team sack leaders J.R. Collins and James Gayle return.

Cornerback Kyle Fuller, who led the team in tackles

QUICK HITS: VIRGINIA TECH

- Head coach: Frank Beamer
- 2011 record: 11-2 (7-1)
- 2011 Coastal Division finish: First place
- Projected Coastal Division finish: First place
- Date with North Carolina: Oct. 6

for loss last season, returns to anchor a strong starting secondary.

Virginia Tech is the early favorite to win the ACC Coastal Division's bid to the ACC championship game, but its greatest challenge might come in the first week when it faces Georgia Tech's potent running attack.

The expectations are high for the defense, with comparisons being drawn to the Hokies' 2006 team. That squad led the nation in scoring defense.

"A lot of people are talking about how good the defense can be," Fuller said. "But right now we have to show that."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

Freshman QB takes charge

By Aaron Dodson
Staff Writer

Just 60 minutes into his first year as the University of Maryland's head football coach, Randy Edsall already had one victory under his belt — a 32-24 defeat of the University of Miami. With 11 games left on the schedule, the season seemed full of promise.

But Edsall and the Terrapins would only double this total, ending the 2011 season with a disappointing two wins and 10 losses.

"Two and 10 was not what we wanted, and we are extremely disappointed in that," Edsall said. "There are times in football where you might not be able to satisfy everything in one year. Sometimes you have to take two steps back to move forward."

Maryland's first step this offseason came with the addition of defensive coordinator Brian Stewart to the team's coaching staff in January.

The Terrapins, who gave up a conference-worst 457 yards of offense per game last season, will play under Stewart's new defensive scheme this year. This season, Maryland will switch from a 4-3 to a 3-4 alignment.

"Our defense will be a totally different animal this year," senior defensive tackle Joe Vellano said. "It's been a little difficult making the change but coach Stewart is just one of those guys you can follow. He says we're a new team, 0-0, and with him every day there's something new."

The Maryland offense will also undergo a change after losing both quarterbacks that saw time as starters last

QUICK HITS: MARYLAND

- Head coach: Randy Edsall
- 2011 record: 2-10 (1-7)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: Sixth place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: Sixth place
- Date with North Carolina: Nov. 24

season. Junior Danny O'Brien transferred to Wisconsin in March, and the team lost junior C.J. Brown to a torn ACL during training camp.

Edsall announced via Twitter that freshman quarterback Perry Hills will lead a slightly revamped Maryland offense in its Sept. 1 season opener against William & Mary.

"The offense this year will be pretty explosive. It's more pro style now, pretty much what we did two years ago," senior wide receiver Kevin Dorsey said. "But, I'd say it's close to 70 percent the same as last year. There were plays I looked at and saw that one thing was tweaked or different."

As preparation continues leading up to the start of the season, Edsall believes familiarity will translate to success this year.

"In terms of having the kind of program that I want to have, it's going to be a test of time," Edsall said. "But now I understand the players a lot better and what makes them tick."

"They better understand what my expectations are, the direction we want to go in, and what we, as a team, are all about."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

Veteran players to lead NCSU

Glennon and other returning players look to build on 2011.

By Brooke Pryor
Assistant Sports Editor

This season the N.C. State football team is taking things to the streets.

The "This Is Our State" campaign, which launched this summer, features players in front of prominent North Carolina sites and urges fans to send in their own photos.

But the Wolfpack will have to do more than pose for pictures to continue its quest toward becoming a top ACC football team.

NCSU surged in the second half of the 2011 season, finishing 8-5 overall and 4-4 in the ACC. In the penultimate game of the season, the Wolfpack shocked then No. 7 Clemson, 37-13.

This season, NCSU returns with many of the tools necessary for success against top teams.

"This is by far the most experienced and deepest team we've had," head coach Tom O'Brien said. "We went through the first three years losing a third of the football team when we had to change things around."

After being thrust into the starting position last year with the departure of quarterback Russell Wilson, Mike Glennon returns with more experience and responsibility.

"There were times last year when I felt like I was hot and cold," Glennon said. "But I feel like I've learned a lot from that point and just learned to take control of the offense — take control of the team."

"Being a senior now, with a year under my belt, I feel like guys look at me a different way now."

In his first year starting, Glennon completed 62.5 percent of his passes for 3,054 yards and 31 touchdowns.

While Glennon is focused on completing passes, cornerback David Amerson's sights are set on disrupting them — his opponents' passes, that is.

Amerson set a single-season ACC record with 13 interceptions in 2011, including two picks that led to NCSU's 31-24 win over Louisville in the Belk Bowl.

"The plays he makes on the ball, there's just not a word for it — it's ridiculous," safety Earl Wolff said. "Having (Amerson) on my team as a player, a friend, a brother — it's great to have him there."

Wolff joins Amerson as a part of what could be a nearly impenetrable secondary. With 255 career tackles, Wolff is the most experienced member of a veteran unit.

"There's some experience back there with playmaking and athleticism," Wolff said. "Just all around I feel like we can be the best in the nation."

NCSU will rely on its veterans as they open the season facing Tennessee in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game today.

"I think it's a great opponent to start the season off with because it's not going to be easy, it's going to be a tough, tough game to win," Glennon said. "But we feel like we've prepared hard this whole off-season so we can be ready for it."

"Most of the offense is back. We've worked together a long time and we feel like we're ready to make the next step."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

QUICK HITS: N.C. STATE

- Head coach: Tom O'Brien
- 2011 record: 7-5 (4-4)
- 2011 Atlantic Division finish: Fourth place
- Projected Atlantic Division finish: Third place
- Date with North Carolina: Oct. 27

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2011 record	5-6, 3-5 SOCON	7-6, 5-2 Big East	5-7, 4-4 CUSA	2-10, 1-6 WAC
2011 conference finish	7th in SOCON	T-1st in Big East	3rd in the East Division of CUSA	Last in WAC
Post-season result	FCS, missed tournament	L, 31-24 to N.C. State at the Belk Bowl	no bowl	no bowl
Returning starters	14	17	14	10
2011 leading passer & player stats	Thomas Wilson, 3057 yd, 23 TD	Teddy Bridgewater, 2129 yd, 14 TD	Dominique Davis, 3225 yd, 25 TD	Brian Reader, 1974 yd, 10 TD
2011 leading rusher & player stats	A.J. Harris, 560 yd, 1 TD	Vic Anderson, 539 yd, 3 TD	Torrance Hunt, 489 yd, 2 TD	Princeton McCarty, 705 yd, 3 TD
Key defensive players and stats	Joshua Jones, 112 tackles	Dexter Heyman, 90 tackles	Jeremy Grove, 122 tackles	Tre'Shawn Robinson, 117 tackles

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DTH/CAMERON LEWIS

Miami ready to move past offseason

By Robbie Harms
Assistant Sports Editor

If there's one college football program that has rivaled North Carolina in negative off-the-field news during the past few years, it's Miami.

On July 20, Yahoo! released a scathing report that, among other things, alleged coach Al Golden "had direct knowledge" of potential recruiting violations committed less than one week after he was hired in December 2010.

The report is just one of many setbacks that have plagued the Hurricanes this offseason, but Golden vows the past is exactly that — the past.

"This is behind us," Golden said. "We are moving forward. Our kids have moved forward. Our team is making a lot of progress."

The last time Miami won a bowl game was in 2006, and every year since then stories have been written during the offseason proclaiming that the Hurricanes are on the

verge of restoring the program's glory.

"I think people miss us being on the national scene," Golden said. "You could argue that when the Hurricanes are playing their best, that's as good a ticket as any in the city. That's what we need to get back to."

Golden identified three main areas in which his team must improve to realize that goal — nutrition, strength and conditioning.

To that end, Miami has brought in nutritionists and updated its strength training routines, and Golden pledges that a new culture has pervaded the team.

"(Golden) shows us his way, his plan, and we believe in it," senior running back Mike James said. "He's been loyal to us, he stands for what he believes in and we stand behind him."

Perhaps the biggest on-field issue for Miami was choosing its starting quarterback.

Redshirt sophomore Ryan Williams and junior Stephen Morris battled for the spot in camp, and on Aug. 13, Morris

was named the starter.

"I've got a lot of confidence in Stephen," James said. "A lot of people don't know that Stephen is a very, very smart kid. He knows his stuff inside and out ... He's a vocal leader, he's more of a get-in-your-face, get-things-done type of guy."

The Hurricanes open Saturday at Boston College, and after the turbulent offseason, they're ready to turn the focus to actual competition.


"Everybody on the team has bought into coach Golden, bought into the program," senior defensive back Brandon McGee said.

QUICK HITS:
MIAMI

- Head coach: Al Golden
- 2011 record: 6-6 (3-5)
- 2011 Coastal Division finish: Fourth place
- Projected Coastal Division finish: Fifth place
- Date with North Carolina: Oct. 13

"(We're) ready to do great things."

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.



DTH FILE PHOTO

Former UNC tight end Christian Wilson evades Miami's Jimmy Gaines during the Hurricanes' win in Chapel Hill last season.

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Blue Devils find hope in close losses

By Andrew Romaine
Staff Writer

It has been nearly two decades since the Duke football team last had a winning season or played in a bowl game.

And although the Blue Devils finished last season with just three wins and in last place in the ACC

Coastal Division for the second straight year, there was a silver lining — the team lost four games by a touchdown or less.

This year, the Blue Devils hope to come out on the other side in close games.

“Last year we lost a lot of close games, but that’s the thing with us — we’re in it,” said senior defensive lineman Kenny Anunike. “We’re in a lot of close games, but close isn’t good enough. We want to

win. We just need to finish.” The Blue Devils have the offensive weapons to have a turnaround season.

Senior quarterback Sean Renfree will start under center for the third consecutive season. He is already the most accurate quarterback in Duke history and ranks in the top five of the school’s passing leaders.

Renfree’s go-to receiver, Conner Vernon, is a pre-season All-ACC selection.

“Last year was last year, and this is a new year,” Vernon said. “We have a new attitude on our shoulders, and we felt like we are definitely good enough to make a bowl this year, and our attitude this offseason is that we know we’re good enough, so we just have to come out and prove it.”

Fifth-year coach David Cutcliffe will do everything he can to get playmakers on the field, including experi-

menting with different positions. Back-up quarterbacks Brandon Connette and Anthony Boone are mobile and versatile, and will see the field in a variety of schemes.

The Blue Devils’ second-leading rusher last year, Desmond Scott, will likely take most of his snaps at slot receiver this season to take advantage of his speed and elusiveness in the open field.

Scott will help fill the void left by injured wide receiver Blair Holliday, who suffered serious head injuries in a jet ski accident in July.

The Blue Devils will wear helmet stickers this season to honor Holliday, who was transferred from UNC Hospitals to a brain injury rehabilitation center in Atlanta in early August. He remains in critical, but stable condition.

If the Blue Devils can overcome the loss of Holliday

- QUICK HITS: DUKE**
- Head coach: David Cutcliffe
 - 2011 record: 3-9 (1-7)
 - 2011 Coastal Division finish: Sixth place
 - Projected Coastal Division finish: Sixth place
 - Date with North Carolina: Oct. 20

— both emotionally and on the football field — they could snap the nation’s longest bowl drought. “This team is a bowl team,” Cutcliffe said. “I can’t let them get off the hook. They need to understand that they’re expected to win and can win. So that’s going to be our focus.”



DTH FILE PHOTO
UNC tailback Giovani Bernard evades a Blue Devil tackler. The Tar Heels have held onto the Victory Bell for the past eight years.

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