

Sports

Football team to balance offense in 2008

by Joseph Chilton
Editor-in-Chief

In their inaugural game two years ago after over a half century of gridiron dormancy the Brevard College football team played in front of over 5,500 fans.

Last season, however, the team averaged 2,459 fans each Saturday.

The numbers suggest that the novelty of simply having a football team is beginning to wear off, and that it will now take wins, more than the two per season that the last two autumns have seen at Brevard Memorial Stadium, to retain the interest of the Brevard College community.

Due to the return of the majority of last year's impact players coupled with the addition of a slew of talented transfers, Coach Paul Hamilton feels that the Tornados are headed in the direction of success.

"When you're starting a program a program you have got to get your kids believing that they can win each and every Saturday. We made strides towards that in the off-season," Hamilton said at South Atlantic Conference Media Day earlier this month.

According to Hamilton, the biggest change put into place for the 2008 campaign is that this year's Tornados will utilize the air attack much more than last year's smash mouth oriented squad.

"Last year we couldn't throw it into the ocean," said Hamilton, referring to the fact that the Brevard passed for less than 70 yards per game last season. "We are going to try to be more balanced this season."



Preseason All-SAC second team running back John Taylor scores in a 2007 contest

A change at quarterback has been made in hopes of facilitating the addition of an aerial assault. Sophomore Trey Wilborn, last year's starting quarterback, has moved to the slot in order to make room for Coach Hamilton's son, Kye, to take the reigns under center. Hamilton started 21 games in two seasons at Division I Elon before transferring to Brevard and sitting out last season.

"Of course this is a dad talking, but I think Kye's ability to throw the football makes us a different team," Hamilton told the SAC media.

Although BC will pass more this season, the foundation of their offense will still be senior running back John Taylor, a pre-season all-SAC second team selection who ran for a team high 766 yards and 11 touchdowns last season.

According to Hamilton, Taylor's productivity was hampered last season by an inexperienced line. With the entire offensive line from last season returning with an extra year of seasoning, the setting could be set for Taylor to return to the form that allowed him to be the top rusher in the

Southern Conference while suiting up for Elon in 2005.

"John ran behind a lot of young pups last year, but this year I'm looking forward to seeing him run it about 25 times a game," Hamilton said.

An improved offense should alleviate the pressure placed on the Tornado defense, a unit that saw the field a great deal last season.

The biggest obstacle that the defense had to overcome last season was a lack of size, a problem that caused many smaller players to play down, away from their natural positions.

The Brevard College coaching staff brought in four transfers on the defensive line over the off season, additions who should allow several of last year's linemen to return to their natural positions.

Nobody will benefit more from the super-sizing of the defensive line than 6-foot-2, 235-pound junior Brandon Rawls, who will now get to move back from defensive end to his natural position of outside linebacker, a spot where Hamilton is expecting big things from Rawls.

"Brandon is big and he runs very well. He along with three transfers that we are bringing in should give us some very good outside linebackers."

At the inside linebacker position, the Tornados return their two leading tacklers from last season, junior Stanley Jones and senior Elliott Collins.

In the secondary, senior Josh Durm, who recorded 57 tackles at the safety position, returns and will bring toughness to the defensive backfield. The Tornado coaching staff is also excited about the return of sophomore Shorick Johnson, who suffered a fractured hip and missed the latter portion of last season. According to Hamilton has recovered well and had a great off-season.

The strongest point of this year's Tornados will be special teams. Senior punter Luke Lovelace boomed punts for an average of 36.2 yards per kick last year, and according to Hamilton, sophomore place kicker Chase Henry has had a very impressive pre-season.

"With our kicking game, we have a chance," Hamilton said.

The Brevard College football team has experienced the expected growing pains over the last two years, but this season's ten game slate should be an opportunity to prove that the program is nearing arrival as a well-respected college football program.

"Personnel wise, we've still got to get better, there's no question about it," Hamilton said.

"But we had people say they would play us at the beginning of last season who said they wouldn't play us after the season ended. I think that says something."