

East switches to wing-T offense

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

When East Forsyth Coach Perry Pearson ponders what might occur in Friday night's season opener with Mount Tabor, his thoughts turn to the opposition's strength.

"I think it will be a good, hard-fought ballgame," Pearson said. "The thing I was most impressed with in Mount Tabor's scrimmage with North was they hit real well. They stick you real good."

The 11th-year Eagle coach hopes his club can counter the Spartans' hard hitting with a deep backfield, which will operate out of the wing-T. That combination produced a pair of touchdowns in East's scrimmage with West last Friday.

"The offense is new for us, but it's real old," Pearson said. "I think it lets us take advantage of our depth in the backfield. We would have liked to run it last year."

The Eagles ran the I in '84, which required plenty of straight-ahead blocking for power sweeps. The wing-T features more pulling linemen and frequent misdirection in the backfield.

Pearson's running talent includes seniors Reggie Torrence, Maurice Robinson and Kerry Samuels. Torrence will start at

quarterback, Robinson at fullback and Samuels is a possible starter at halfback. Pearson also believes sophomore Lamont Scales can develop into one of his top backs and he will call at times on Lawrence Long, William Carter, Stephon Williams and Phil Williford.

Another plus is a capable No. 2 quarterback in sophomore Chan LaRue.

"They are two pretty good ones," Pearson said of Torrence and LaRue. "I won't feel uncomfortable playing either. I won't alternate them. Reggie will start, but I won't hesitate to play Chan early."

But while the backfield is East's strength, Pearson has a standout tackle in Robbie Parker.

"He's the best lineman we have," the Eagle coach said. "We need nine or 10 more like him."

The 6-foot-2, 210-pound Parker, who attended Atkins Middle School, played tight end last year, but he will be an offensive guard and defensive tackle this season.

"Robbie is an awfully good lineman," Pearson said. "He's fairly quick and plays the block well."

Parker is the only defensive lineman who returns from a club

that allowed less than 12 points per game.

"One thing we were concerned about before our scrimmage with West was how we'd hit," Pearson said. "I think we went out and did a pretty good job." The Eagles held the Titans to one score.

"We like the players' attitudes," he continued. "They've responded well to our coaching and tried to do everything we asked of them."

Pearson believes Mount Tabor will have the edge in experience, which isn't a bad commodity to have in an opener.

"We lost 31 seniors, so they're going to have more experience," said the East coach. "Since they are a new high school, almost all of their players are back."

But Pearson has won 71 percent of his games in his decade at East -- something that will be in the back of the Spartans' minds.

Another thing that Mount Tabor Coach Ed McDonald will have on his mind is the comparative health of the two teams. The Spartans have several major injuries, while the Eagles are in good shape. East lineman Brent Willard, who was the only sophomore on the team last year, is doubtful because he is suffering a bout with mononucleosis.

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"Injuries are one of my biggest worries at this point," McDonald said. "Our depth is diminished. If we accumulate any more injuries early in the season, we will be tight for replacements."

Also injured are fullback Boysie Cunningham (severe cuts in right thumb and index finger), tight end Andy Monk (pinched shoulder nerve) and fullback Terry Hauser (bruised shoulder). Tackle Jerome Miller, a transfer from East, has been slowed in preseason because he has no equipment. Miller is 6-2 and weighs 320 pounds.

The Spartans, who posted a 5-5 record last year against an assortment of 3-A, 2-A and jayvee opponents, will miss two players who no longer live in Winston-Salem. Center Mac Messina moved to Pennsylvania and punter Darren Applett to Texas.

The team's strength should be defense, anchored by nose tackle Jamie Mitchell, tackle Brian Brookshire and linebacker Daryl Jones.

But the secondary may be Mount Tabor's greatest strength. Returnees include cornerback Eddie Reese, strong safety Michael Clark and cornerback Terry Martin. McDonald has also been impressed with the play of sophomore free safety Pat Cunn-

ingham. "At the beginning of the season, our defense will carry us," McDonald said. "We have a pretty decent offense, but generally it takes longer for it to get untracked."

Mount Tabor should hold its own in the conference and perhaps will challenge for a playoff spot. The Central Piedmont gets three berths.

"I think we'll be very competitive," McDonald said. "It will be difficult for us to realize we're not an established program sometime, but we have a talented group."

The Spartans open at East Forsyth tomorrow night at 8. The Eagles, coming off a 7-3 record, may not have the personnel they've had in recent years. But McDonald can be nothing but humble when he contemplates Coach Perry Pearson's 181-74-7 record in a decade-long tenure at East.

"Coach Pearson is a great coach," McDonald said. "He's seen a lot of games. No matter what kind of talent he has, Coach Pearson can bank on his experience to come up with something successful. The rest of us are young in terms of experience."

The Mount Tabor coach is

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