

CIAA WEEK IN REVIEW

Shaw wins conference championship for second-straight year

BY LUT WILLIAMS
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Shaw's high-scoring offense woke up in the second half and its nationally-ranked defense held Elizabeth City State in check as the Bears won their first-ever back-to-back CIAA titles in a 36-7 drubbing of the Vikings in the conference's Championship Game before 7,542 fans in Durham last Saturday.

Up just 13-7 to start the second half, the Bears (8-3), who came in averaging 41.1 points per game, struck early on a 48-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Travis Robinson to wideout Lenell King two plays into the third quarter. The Bears led 19-7 after Caleb Reid's PAT was blocked.

After forcing ECSU (7-4) to punt after one first down, the Bears went 69 yards in 12 plays, nine of those plays and 68 yards via the ground, en route to Reid's 27-yard field goal with 6:29 left for a 22-7 lead. After another ECSU three-and-out and a partially blocked 10-yard Daniel Mendez punt, Shaw needed just five plays to cover 41 yards with running back Aaron Ellison taking it in on a 2-yard run. The third quarter ended with the Bears leading 29-7 and the contest

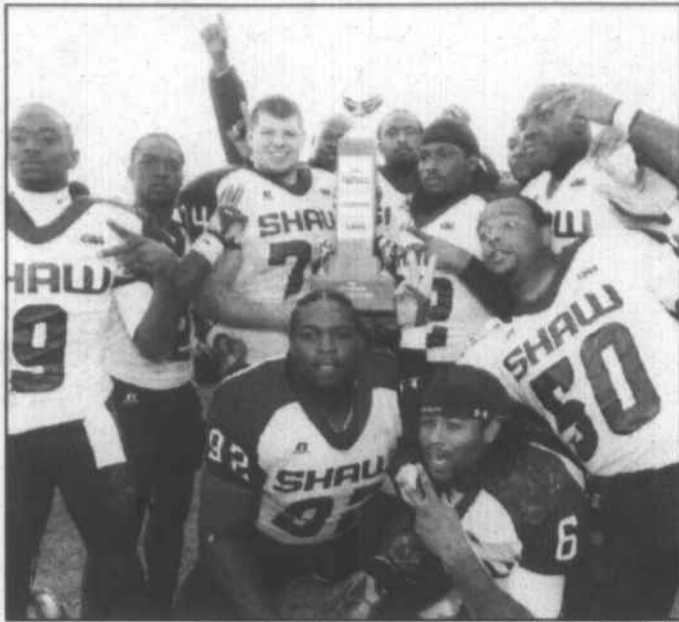


Photo by Steve Worthy

Shaw players celebrate their CIAA football championship after their 36-7 win over ECSU last Saturday.

all but decided. Shaw added a fourth quarter TD via a Robinson pass of 21 yards to James Pettway.

"I told them we needed to play as a team, no individual plays, but play as a team," said victorious coach Darrell Asberry of his half-time speech that helped his team shake its first-half doldrums. "We just stepped it up."

For the game, Shaw produced 410 yards of total offense including 201 on the ground. Raymon Williams, who led the ground attack with 96 yards on 16 carries,

was named Shaw's MVP. Robinson finished with 16 completions in 33 attempts for 209 yards and 3 TDs. Shaw's defense, which came in ranked first in total defense in the nation giving up just 213 yards per game, held the Vikings to 238 yards and the one score. They sacked Rich four times. Rod Jones, who led ECSU with nine tackles, was chosen as the Vikings' MVP.

If anything could be called a turning point in the game it was likely a special teams' play by the Bears. After exchanging punts on

their first four possessions, Shaw's Tyrone Bolton broke through to block a punt by Daniel Mendez late in the first quarter to put the Bears in business, after LaMichael Howell's recovery, at the ECSU 3.

But the Vikings staged a goal-line stand, forcing Shaw to settle for Caleb Reid's 21-yard field goal and a 3-0 lead with 2:48 left in the first quarter. On Shaw's fourth play from scrimmage, Robinson hit Bolden down the seam for a 24-yard score. Reid's PAT put the Bears up 10-0.

Following a Reggie Smith 43-yard kickoff return that put them in Bears' territory at the 43, the Vikings needed just four plays to cover the distance. Dexter Manley reached over a defender on the right sideline to pull in a 28-yard pass for the score. Mendez's PAT left the Vikings trailing 10-7 at the 14:02 mark of the second quarter. Problem was, it would be ECSU's only score in the game.

Shaw added a late field goal just before halftime with Lincoln Shepherd connecting from 43 yards out five seconds before the break for the 13-7 lead.

Note: Lut Williams is the editor of The Black College Sports Page.

Johnson named to Wooden preseason list

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Wake Forest sophomore forward James Johnson has been named a preseason candidate for the John R. Wooden Award, which goes annually to college basketball's top player.

The preseason list is comprised of 50 players, including eight from the Atlantic Coast Conference. Johnson is Wake Forest's first Wooden Award candidate since Justin Gray and Eric Williams in 2005-06. Demon Deacon All-American Tim Duncan won the Wooden Award in 1997.

Johnson is the Deacons' leading returning scorer and rebounder this season. The Cheyenne, Wyo. native was named third team All-ACC and was runner-up in balloting for the ACC Rookie of the Year Award in 2007-08. He also was a unanimous selection to the ACC All-Freshman Team and was named a Freshman All-American by multiple publications.

Created in 1976, the John R. Wooden Award is the most prestigious individual honor in college basketball.

It is bestowed upon the nation's best player at an institution of higher education who has proven to his or her university that he or she is making progress toward graduation and maintaining a cumulative 2.0 GPA.

In mid-January, the Wooden Award Committee will release the Midseason Top 30 list, followed in March by the National Ballot, consisting of approximately 20 top players who have proven to their universities that they are also making progress toward graduation and maintaining a cumulative 2.0 GPA.

The Wooden Award All-American Team will be announced the week of the "Elite Eight" round during the NCAA Tournament.

The 33rd annual Wooden Award ceremony, which will include the announcement of the Men's and Women's Wooden Award, and the presentation of the Wooden Award All-American Teams and the Legends of Coaching Award to Rick Barnes from The University of Texas, will be held at The Los Angeles Athletic Club in April, 2009.



Johnson

Tabor

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move into scoring position. West Forsyth's Cody Wooten dropped the two-point conversion attempt.

Mt. Tabor was able to score one more time before halftime. The Spartans scored in spectacular fashion — going 88 yards in three plays. Zyrale Jeter started the drive with a 42-yard run. Then, Blyre Stokes ran a short distance. Mt. Tabor capped the drive when Kent hit one of his receivers for a 46-yard touchdown connection. On the play, Kent rolled right to get away from two Titans before launching the touchdown pass with 32 seconds to go before halftime.

"Collin has done a good job of leading the team all year," Marazita said. "It's impressive because he didn't get much playing time last year. He backed up Brad Morton, who's our varsity quarterback. So, he might've logged five minutes of total playing time. But he led this team all year. He got better each week — as did a number of players."

West Forsyth seemingly took control of the game in the second half. The Spartans didn't seem to have an answer for Brown. He jumped over and around

most of the Spartan defensive backs. Brown finished with 12 receptions for 118 yards and two touchdowns. Brown's second score of the game occurred with 3:38 to go in the game.

He caught the 15-yard pass over Seth Spencer to make the score 16-12. Ryan Vestal connected with the PAT to pull West to within three points (16-13). West was able to do more than simply get closer to the Spartans on that drive. The Titans were also able to melt most of the second half clock with time consuming plays from the end of the third quarter well into the fourth quarter.

Mt. Tabor and the talented Corey Parker Jr., didn't need but one play to seal the victory for the Spartans and preserve the perfect season. Parker took a routine power play off right tackle 65 yards for the winning touchdown with 3:25 to go in the game.

"That was a big play," said West head JV coach Brian Bowman. "Big plays happen all the time. We were just on the wrong end of that one. But I'm proud of the way my guys fought back. We made a great stand. We've fought hard this entire season. We just came up a little short. I'm still proud of all the kids. They've had a good season.

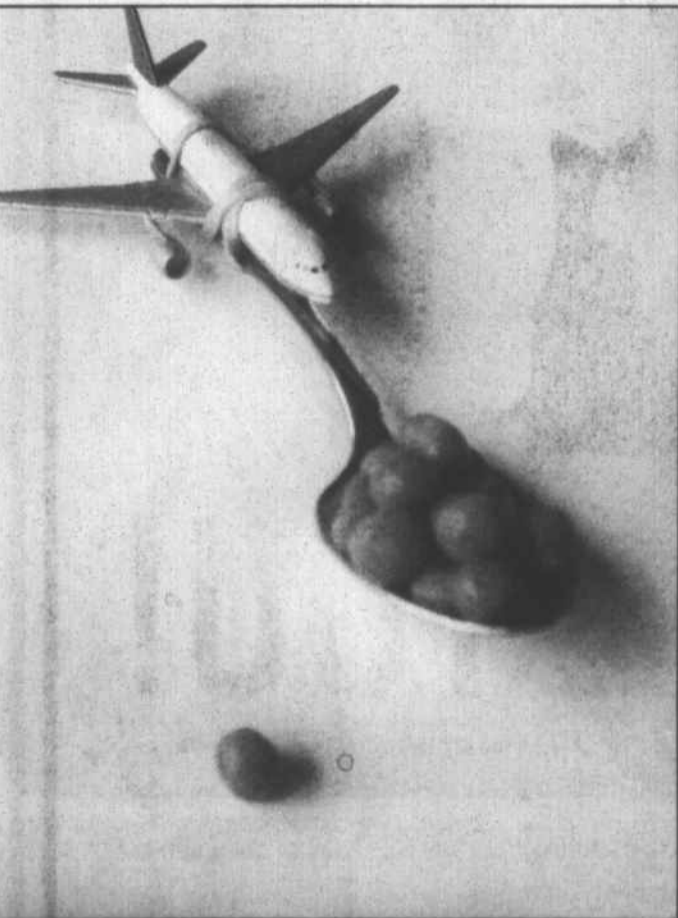
The sophomores are now 15-5. I'm proud of them. I love them all."

Some of the standout players for Mt. Tabor were Kent, Jeter, Parker, Eldridge, Montana Dawson, Ian Anderson, Mike Conner, Stokes and Nick Plummer — to name a few. West was led by Brown, Wade Gasser Sheta, Nick Lee, Chandler White, Jeff Carlton, Daashaun Westmoreland, Jermaine Lewis, Jaleel Franks, Austin Martinez and Dominique Bouyer — among others.



Photo by Charlie Pfaff

Mt. Tabor's Zyrale Jeter follows Blyre Stokes for yards.



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