



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

**Running back Justus Pickett races past defenders on a 28-yard touchdown run.**

**Spring**

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as the Rams head coach. "If we can keep everybody, we're going to have real good chance (to have a championship season)."

Typically, Winston-Salem State fields stellar defensive teams and that's not likely to change in 2016. Trinity Roberts, Brian James and Amyl Smith are key figures in what promises to be a formidable D-line rotation. All three recorded one sack apiece in the spring game. Xavier Gregory and Kyrell Williamson show positive signs of emerging as the designated ringleaders at linebacker.

Offensively, look for the Rams to hammer the opposition with a bruising ground game. At this juncture, there's no way to tell who might get the call as the featured running back. Tyree Massey (867 rushing yards and 8 touchdowns) got most of the totes in 2015, but since it was his senior season, he's no longer available for duty.

Xavier Quick (320 yards, 3 TDs and 4.5 yards per carry last season) could be

the one. The Rams, though, are deep at running back. Kerrion Moore (281 yards, 1 TD, 5.6 yards per carry in 2015) showcased his break-away skills in the spring game by darting through the defense on a 55-yard touchdown run. Moore gained 62 yards on five totes for the White team.

Malik Mosley, who saw spot duty a year ago, is a capable ball carrier who has the ability to make tacklers miss in the open field.

Perhaps the most intriguing backfield prospect for WSSU is Justus Pickett, a transfer from Tennessee who also played at Maryland. Pickett, a senior, produced the game-winning score on a 28-yard touchdown run last Saturday. He finished the day with 40 yards on 10 carries.

"We have few guys who can take it the distance," said Boulware. "But we also have a couple of guys who can pound you until the cows come home. It's going to be an arsenal there."

Using this year's spring game as a barometer for WSSU's passing attack is a tricky proposition. With the strong winds, there was no way to get a feel for the quar-

terbacks' throwing accuracy or the ability of the receivers to make the proper adjustments on deep throws and fade routes.

For now, the Rams starting QB is Rod Tinsley Jr., the redshirt-freshman who led WSSU to victory over Bowie State in the CIAA championship game last November. When fall practice begins, JUCO transfer A.J. Nocciolo is expected to challenge Tinsley.

Tinsley connected on 6 of 13 throws for 81 yards, which included a 30-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Holmes. Nocciolo, his counterpart on the White team, completed 8 of 15 passes for 65 yards.

Boulware concedes that Tinsley has an advantage because he's had a full year in the Rams offensive system. Even so, he likes the progress that Nocciolo has made since his arrival at WSSU in January.

"Right now, Rod has the hot hand," said Boulware. "We brought A.J. in for the spring and he hasn't a chance to get his feet wet in our system until now. He's better now than when he came in. But Rod was the quarterback in the CIAA champi-

onship game. He had a chance to taste some adversity early on and grow through it."

Tinsley finds himself in a vastly different situation from a year ago. At that time, he was one of several newcomers who had aspirations to become the Rams starter at QB. During the season, Tinsley had his struggles. But in the end, he played a key role in bringing another CIAA football championship trophy back to Winston-Salem State.

"The difference between last year and right now is confidence," he said. "I've studied and I know the play book a lot better. I know my abilities and what I can do. In that championship game, we had some low moments, but we figured it out. I learned how to stay confident and believe in my teammates."

"To build on that, you keep studying film; keep getting better in the weight room and the practice field. It's about perfecting your craft and being the best that you can be."



Photo by Guilford College Athletics

**Anais Weatherly of Winston-Salem frequently draws double-teams as the top performer for Guilford College. This past season, Weatherly was named Honorable Mention NCAA Division III All-American.**

**“Playing against guys was really a big help.”**

**-Anais Weatherly**

**Weatherly**

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knack for making big plays at the most crucial times. Over the past year, she improved a lot with the use of her left hand and her 3-point shooting. In our league, there is no one who can stop her."

The desire to perfect her craft is the main reason why Weatherly exudes confidence about her ability to raise her level of play for next season. Last summer, she was in the gym

three hours a day, five days a week. To add to the intensity and degree of difficulty of her work-outs, she trained with and competed against men in pick-up games. Some were members of Guilford's men's team.

"Playing against guys was really a big help," said Weatherly, who graduated from Mount Tabor three years ago. "It helped a lot with my quickness and being able to anticipate what's going to happen on the court. I didn't start

playing basketball until my ninth grade year and I didn't play AAU until the summer after my senior year of high school. So, I feel like there's still so much more room for me to grow as a player."

As the Quakers marquee player, Weatherly, an ODAC All-Tournament pick, frequently faced opposing defenses which were designed specifically to limit her scoring. As the season progressed, she drew more double-teams and saw a lot of box-and-

one defenses.

Perhaps the most improved part of Weatherly's game is outside shooting. Her best game shooting the ball from long distance came in an early-season 67-56 win over city rival Greensboro College. Weatherly scored six 3-pointers in the first half, which included four 3-balls in the first quarter.

"Nobody came out to guard me because they knew I could get to the basket quickly off the dribble," she said. "So, I kept taking

the shots. That was a fun game because I got a chance to show off my guard skills."

Even though Weatherly has another season of college eligibility remaining, she's already thinking about her athletic career beyond Guilford. She's fully aware that making the grade at the next level will be a difficult task. But when she considers how far she's come in such a short period of time, Weatherly believes she can give herself a reasonable chance to

succeed.

At her height, there's no question that she will have to change positions to play pro ball. In her case, that means playing in the backcourt. That's why she's going to spend much of this upcoming summer working on extending her shooting range and improving her ball-handling.

"After college, I want to go pro," she said. "To do that, it's a must that I get better with my handle and with my shooting accuracy."

**Jumper**

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When Reynolds watched Wright win a slam dunk contest a year ago, she was convinced then that the basketball player was tailor-made for the high jump.

"Tremond has natural talent," said Reynolds. "When I started working with him, I just told him what he was doing wrong. He listened, took it all in, and did it right. And from that point, he continued to improve."

At this point in his still-embryonic track career, Wright competes on sheer athleticism. He didn't come out for the track team until after basketball season, which means that he didn't compete during the winter indoor season.

Given that he first started out by jumping 5-8 and then improved by 10 inches in a span of a few weeks is unheard of, because such rapid development is so rare. That's because the high jump is an event in which technique makes all the difference. Right now, Wright uses a 20-foot approach to the bar, which is a very short distance, compared to his more polished counterparts.

"Right now, he doesn't have the technique," said Charlton Rolle, head coach for boys' track at Reynolds.

"He doesn't have a full approach yet - so once he gets some speed and some distance behind him - it's just scary when you think about the possibilities for him."

"For starters, he's just now learning how to flop and how to take off and hit all those correct positions. I've seen him jump 6-8 in practice. So, now he just has to do that in an actual meet. Jumping 6-8 or 6-10 is within his reach for this spring."

While there's no question about Wright's physical gifts, his coaches are cognizant that he must handle the mental side of competing in order to contend for high jump titles at the regional and state levels. They believe his ability to handle the mental aspects of competition will ultimately help to determine his level of success.

"The high jump is very mental," Reynolds explained. "Sometimes, Tremond can get out of the zone and over-think things. That's when I have to remind him to just go for it. He knows he can do it."

With about a month remaining in this outdoor season, Wright is confident about his chances to clear higher heights and win a state title. At the same time, he fully understands that he cannot reach his goals based solely on raw jumping ability.

"I expect to win a (state) championship," said Wright, who wants to attend college on a track scholarship and major in business or engineering. "I really want it and I'm going to bring one to my school. The biggest challenge for me is technique. As I do the work and get better with my technique, I feel like I can go a lot higher. It comes down to putting a lot of time and effort into it. That's what you have to do."

Even though Wright is brand-new to the sport, Rolle believes that by season's end, Wright will have an opportunity to further his education and compete in the high jump at the college level. Rolle's rationale is based on what Wright has already accomplished.

"I haven't seen anybody quite like Tremond," said Rolle. "Jumping 6-6 will score points in a (NCAA Division I) college track meet. He's proven the caliber of athlete he is, and I think he has a lot more left in his tank. Track is definitely where he belongs. We're just trying to help him get comfortable with what he knows already. I tell him, don't think man, just do what you did the first day of practice - just go out and jump."