

ECSU success changes CIAA

OK, so I was wrong. It happens. Bowie State won't be winning the football championship this year.

I was right on one account, however. Mike Lynn is a good recruiter, but his coaching skills leave much to be desired. For the second straight year, the Bulldogs are a disappointment. Last year, Bowie blew a 17-0 lead to North Carolina Central in the championship game and lost. Then they got nipped in the Pioneer Bowl by a Tuskegee team they should have beaten.



BONITA BEST

This year was supposed to be theirs. OK, maybe some of us in the media, i.e. me, bought into the hype, but one look at their recruiting class, along with the players returning, and it was hard not to get excited. But next to Fayetteville State, Bowie has to be the most disappointing team in the conference.

The Bulldogs' loss to Morgan State should have been a barometer of things to come. Despite being Division I-AA, BSU owned Morgan last year. And should have again. Instead, the Bulldogs self-destructed and lost 28-20 after leading 13-0. It's been downhill ever since as BSU has lost three straight games.

So, instead of Bowie, it's going to be Elizabeth City State in the championship. The Mighty Vikings are for real. Just ask St. Augustine's. That 49-0 score was no fluke. The Falcons did do their part to beat themselves, but a year ago, ECSU still wouldn't have capitalized.

Coach Waverly Tillar, one of the more charismatic coaches in the league - just attend a football luncheon sometime - has a decent defense and three good quarterbacks with rifles disguised as throwing arms.

As congenial as Tillar is at the podium, he's just the opposite on the field. Deep into the fourth quarter against the Falcons, the Vikings were still throwing the ball.

"That's just the way our guys play the game," Tillar said. "It's the nature of our offense."

Yeah stick to that story, coach. We think it's payback time - for a lot of folks.

St. Aug's coach Michael Costa R-E-A-L-L-Y needs a Shaw game about now. The Falcons had won the previous two meetings. The teams didn't schedule each other this year, but Costa could use some good PR.

Against ECSU, the Falcons didn't look that bad in 2002, their first year back after reinstating football. The most troublesome aspect was the lack of discipline displayed.

St. Aug's is averaging a league-worst 145 yards in penalties per game. Stupid penalties at that: illegal procedures, delay of game, offsides. During one drive against the Vikings, the Falcons were first-and-10 at the ECSU 20. Four downs later, it was fourth-and-30.

This is not a young and inexperienced team. Yes, losing defensive player of the year Tyrone Pettaway and offensive

Please see ELIZABETH CITY/3C

Golden Bulls focused on St. Augustine's

Continued from page 1C

happened in school history. The Livingstone win was Smith's largest margin of victory this season and the Bulls' first shutout since a 26-0 win against Elizabeth City State in 1998. It was McNeill's first victory against Livingstone in four tries.

"We'll celebrate ... then start thinking about St. Aug's," Smith linebacker Ed Wilson said.

For the first time this year, Smith dominated with defense. The Bulls held Livingstone to 156 yards, including 33 on the ground and special teams turned in a score when De'Audra Dix opened the second half with a 90-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and 16-0 Smith advantage.

Although Smith didn't have to push offensively, McNeill wants to see improvement in order for the Bulls to stay

within a game of West Division leader N.C. Central. The Bulls gained just 227 yards against Livingstone, but it was more than enough to win.



McNeill

"We know as we get closer in the division, we're going to have to do a better job of grinding things out and a better job of consistency on offense," he said.

True to form, Smith wasn't spectacular on offense, but steady. Quarterbacks Carlton Richardson and Donja Good were mistake-free in the passing game and the Bulls didn't turn the ball over, which didn't give Livingstone a chance to rally late. Sure, they were conservative, but it's working.

"Personally, I don't take a

lot of chances at the end of the game," McNeill said. "If we're up by three scores, we're going to grind it, we're going to let people come and beat us defensively. I'm not going to give any team a chance to just beat us by trying to do things that make no sense to do, especially with the new NCAA rules" designed to speed the time to finish games.

"We have a wonderful coaching staff," said Wilson, who tallied nine tackles, a sack and forced fumble against Livingstone. "They're putting us in position to make plays, they're coaching us, getting us to do the things we need to do in practice. We couldn't ask for no more. We're really buying into what they're telling us this year and we're advertising it every week."

Smith's success is a surprise in the CIAA, where the

Bulls were picked to finish last in the West in preseason polls. But the seeds of a breakthrough season were sewn during last year's 0-10 campaign. It took some fine-tuning through junior college transfers that brought in players like Wilson, but the components were in place.

"For the 85 or 90 guys who started camp with us, we knew what we could do just based on the way we played the year before," McNeill said.

"And knowing a couple of recruits and people we added were going to definitely help us win games. The return of (backup quarterback and former three-year starter) Goodson is a perfect example. It's something other people hadn't expected, but we're not beat until we're beat and for 60 minutes, we play the best we can."

Bobcats guards find benefit to shortcomings

Continued from page 1C

world," said Knight. "We've been used to having to carry our teams."

Their positive attitude even rubbed off on some of the players watching from the bench.

"It was extremely disappointing, but in any situation I'm in I try to take something positive from it," said Sean May, who only played in 23 games before suffering a sea-

son ending right knee injury.

"It helped me see the game from another perspective. To see and understand you can still pick up a lot of things from just watching."

"Those guys had to go through a lot of things last year," added May. "A lot of close games we lost, but it's just going to help us with more experience...for this season."

Yet, even with the positive

spin on last season, these guys are all glad to be starting the pre-season as a complete unit.

"There were times we wouldn't have minded having a bit more help," said Knight.

Going into this season with a clean bill of health for the team, Felton feels a weight has definitely been lifted off his shoulders.

"Now we can add me and [Knight] out there splitting

the time as point guard...add Adam [Morrison] and Matt [Carroll] out on the wing...it is going to be a lot of fun," said Felton. "With Gerald Wallace going back to his position at the three spot, it's going to be amazing."

"I just sit around here and smile now," he added, with his trademark grin. So far this season, the whole team does.

North Meck tailback Vereen proves his mettle

Continued from page 1C

total in county history. He also scored a pair of touchdowns to help North to a 19-0 win.

GOING FOR 100: Independence High will try for its 100th straight win

Friday at East Mecklenburg. The Patriots have been anything but perfect this season, but have found ways to win. With the best defense in the county, and perhaps the state, look for Independence

to control tempo on that side of the ball. Of course, it'll help to give Leak the ball early and often.

OH, BEHAVE: If you're going to East, arrive early and leave the drama home. Extra security will be on

hand just in case.

TOP GAME: Butler at Myers Park. The Mustangs need a win to stay in contention in the Southwestern 4A. Butler is chasing Independence, too.



Your source for championship sports coverage

The Charlotte Post

FIRST LEGACY

FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

www.firstlegacyfcu.org

A legacy of service

431 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, NC 28216

(704) 375-5781

A Legacy Of Service for 65 Years

BASIC SERVICES

- Checking Accounts
- Savings Accounts
- IRA Accounts
- Overdraft Protection
- Certificates of Deposit
- Credit Cards
- Debit Cards
- Money Orders
- Travelers Checks
- Wire Transfers

LOANS

- Auto/Truck for New and Used
- Share Secured Loans
- Share Unsecured Loans
- Home Equity Loans
- Mortgage Loans
- Tuition Assistance Loans
- Christmas Loans
- Gap Insurance
- Credit Disability/Life Insurance
- Extended Warranty Insurance

Only 2 Days Left!

Certificate of Deposit Special 6%

Available Oct. 10th-14th Only!

Minimum Deposit \$1,000 14 Month CD. Limited Offer

Call Today! 704-375-5781

\$20 Minimum Deposit To Open A New Account