

New coach, new look for Terps

By FRANK KENNEDY
Staff Writer

Jerry Claiborne did wonders for the Maryland Terrapins. He took an ailing program and turned it into a perennial power.

Until last year, that is.

In Claiborne's final season, the Terps stumbled along with a conservative offense and an inconsistent pass defense. And when Claiborne left College Park to rebuild a dying program at Kentucky after the 1981 season, the Terps had skidded home with 4-6-1 record.

But, as Maryland loyalists will tell you, 1982 is a new year with a new coach and a new outlook.

Bobby Ross takes over the top spot at Maryland following a four-year stint as an assistant for the Kansas City Chiefs of the National Football League.

A five-year coach at The Citadel and member of Claiborne's first Terrapin staff, Ross has every intention of applying the NFL's wide-open philosophy to his new job.

"We'll be throwing the ball a good 50 percent of the time," Ross said.

"We want to be unpredictable. We're not going to wait for things to happen. In addition to winning ball games, we have an image to present to our fans. Hopefully, this type of attack will keep (the fans) interested," Ross added.

This would be quite an about-face from the conservative ground-control games of the past, a style many critics have called dull and unimaginative.

"I hope to change all that," Ross said.

The nucleus of the 1982 Terrapins will not be without experience, however, as 38 lettermen (including 16 starters) return to the lineup.

Offensively, the most trying question is not whether the seven returning starters can move the ball, but rather, how well they can adjust to Ross' "multiple pro attack."

Boomer Esiason, who suddenly found himself starting at quarterback in the second game last year, went on to set a school record 122 pass completions and a near-record 1635 yards in the air.

Esiason (6-4, 198) is aided by considerable depth in the backfield. Junior Joe Brkovich (6-0, 228) and senior Tim Whittie (5-10, 200), after a fair share of playing time last season, will share the fullback spot.

The Terp's number two tailback last year, senior John Nash (6-1, 217), gets the starting nod this season. Nash rushed for 459 yards and caught 16 passes for 247 yards.

Esiason has the protection of a somewhat young front line, but when he can get off a pass, Esiason will have experience on the receiving end.

Veterans John Tice (6-6, 240), Mike Lewis (6-0, 189), and Russell Davis (6-5, 215) caught



Maryland's Boomer Esiason avoids a Carolina defender ... will steer Terps' attack in opener at Penn State

DTH/Scott Sharpe

over 60 percent of Maryland's aerial attempts last year.

Ross feels this unit has explosive potential, but knows that consistency will be crucial to its success.

"Unless we can go into each game believing we're capable of scoring at least three or four touchdowns, we won't be as unstoppable as I know we're capable of being," Ross said.

Defensively, Ross inherits nine starters from a unit that was fourth in the nation against the rush (83.9 yards per game).

"Our line stacks up against anybody. We should be highly competitive against backs like Curt Warner and Kelvin Bryant," Ross said.

Senior linebacker Mike Muller (6-1, 223)

heads the defensive lineup. Muller led Maryland with 107 tackles, including 65 solos, in 1981.

Mike Corvino, a 6-2, 240-pound guard, had 11 quarterback sacks and 71 total tackles last year to lead the interior line.

The Terrapins should show signs of improvement over their subpar performance against the pass last season, as virtually the entire secondary remains intact.

Senior Bill McFadden (6-0, 190) and junior Jonathan Simmons (6-0, 190) will be among those keying the effort to prevent some of the embarrassments of last season.

Wake Forest quarterback Gary Schofield dissected the Terp secondary last year for 556 yards.

The kicking game remains questionable in

the punting department. Gone is Steve Adams, who finished with 59 punts for a 39-yard average. Alan Sadler, a wide receiver who only punted 17 times last season, is the leading candidate for the job.

Place-kicking will not be a problem, as the ACC's 1981 kick-scoring leader, Jess Atkinson, returns to that role.

What all of this means to the Terrapins is difficult to say, difficult even for Ross.

"We'll be so unpredictable that sometimes we won't even know what's going on as coaches," said Ross.

"We have as much of a chance to beat everybody as we do to lose."

Maryland will open its season Sept. 11 at Penn State, a team it has not beaten in 21 years.

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