

N.C. State's opener answers questions

By KEITH LEE
Staff Writer

The outlook for N.C. State's 1982 football team could appear on a weather forecast—partly cloudy with a chance of clearing. But head coach Monte Kiffin feels the team will see sunny skies this year.

After a season-ending six-game losing streak, Kiffin knows a winning season will not come easy. "It could be a difficult season if we lose one or two games early," admitted Kiffin, "but, hey, I'm excited about this season. I really think we are going to win. I start thinking about it, and I really get excited."

Senior center Jeff Nyce added that the team would not be able to underestimate anyone.

"We have a tough schedule ahead of us, but we're looking forward to a good season," he said. "We have a real strong team and our passing game looks good."

But who will be doing the passing for State this season? That question was kicked around all summer, but was apparently answered Saturday night in State's opening victory over Furman.

Tol Avery got the start and led the Wolfpack to a 26-0 win, completing 13 of 25 passes for 174 yards and two touchdown passes (only one less than he had all last season). Junior transfer Tim Esposito will provide State with a capable back-up.

The remainder of the Wolfpack squad includes 40 returning lettermen. They lost 21 lettermen and were hit hardest on the defensive line where senior David Shelton is the only returning starter.

The strength of State's attack lies in the backfield where ACC rushing champ and Rookie of the Year Joe McIntosh returns at the I-Back position. After gaining 1,190 yards last year in 10 games, McIntosh will be used more as a receiver this year in hopes of opening more holes in the ground game.

"Defenses were keying on me," McIntosh said. "If our passing comes through, and I'm optimistic, it will give me a few more openings as a runner."

"Joe isn't the biggest back (5' 11", 188), not the fastest you'll see," said Kiffin. "But he does so many things well. If he has one skill that sets him apart, it's his remarkable balance. He can be hit, appear to be going down and somehow catch himself, keep going, and accelerate."

Joining McIntosh in the backfield will be sophomore Vince Evans. He moves from I-back to fullback and brings a lot of quickness with him (4.65" in the 40). The Pack has a surplus of running backs including Lar-mount Lawson, Chris Cook, Andre Marks, Mike Miller, and Jeff Brown.

The passing game will be directed at Ken Jenkins, returning at flanker with ten catches for 152 yards from 1981. Split-end finds Mike Quick in a Philadelphia Eagles uniform and Ricky Wall, a sophomore from Broughton High stepping in. Look for junior Stanley Davis, who runs the 40 in 4.6", to see plenty of



NC State's Joe McIntosh fends off UNC's Bill Jackson
... Wolfpack sophomore led the ACC in rushing last year

DTH/Scott Sharpe

action there too.

The offensive line that will be opening holes for McIntosh returns a strong nucleus. Nyce will be joined by guards Ernest Butler and Steve Saulnier while sophomore Tim Foster will start at tight end. He will be counted on for strong blocking at the line along with a couple of newcomers at tackle.

Senior guard Doug Howard, an offensive guard two years ago, but a defensive tackle last year, moves back to the offensive line at quick tackle. Meanwhile, red-shirted freshman Joe Milinichik won the starting spot at strong tackle during spring drills.

The biggest question mark for State this fall has been filling the void in the defensive front line. Shelton will be joined at tackle by junior Todd Blackwell, who was a reserve last year. Replacing the tough Al Dellaporta at middle guard will be Mitch Rushing, a transfer from the Naval Academy where he lettered for two years.

Starting at defensive end are sophomores Frank Bush, a key reserve last year, and Mar-

cus Hager, who was impressive enough during fall drills to beat out Darryl Harris.

Linebacker was supposed to be the strong point of the defense with four returning lettermen, but standout Sam Key is lost for the season with a leg injury. That leaves veterans Andy Hendel and Vaughn Johnson as starters, both capable of doing a consistent job. Kiffin has chosen three freshmen as back-ups.

Eric Williams, a Preseason Playboy All-America selection, heads up the State secondary. The senior free safety led the ACC in interceptions last year with seven and has been tabbed by Gil Brandt of the Dallas Cowboys as "among the top three or four defensive backs in the country."

Joining Williams are seniors Perry Williams and Dee Dee Hoggard at the corner-back positions. Junior college transfer Don Wilson inherits the strong safety spot vacated by Louie Meadows who opted for professional baseball.

The kicking game for the Wolfpack will

see fresh faces this year. Departed seniors Todd Auten and Calvin Warren are expected to be replaced by a couple of freshmen with high prep accolades. Marty Martinussen, who averaged 44.7 yards a punt his senior year in high school and Charlotte Country Day graduate Mike Cofer, who hit 10 of 14 field goals last year, including one from 47 yards, are expected to take over the kicking duties from the start.

Overall the Wolfpack has a strong nucleus to count on, but whether they can overcome one of the toughest schedules in the nation remains to be seen.

Williams said that the team's first goal would be a winning season, but they were really shooting for a bowl game, too.

Rumors have surfaced that Kiffin must produce in this third year of a three-year contract to get a renewal. But Kiffin is determined to turn things around this year. "After a 4-7 season, you think of other things," said Kiffin—like partly cloudy with a forecast of sunny skies.



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