

Duke must find a defense

By SCOTT SMITH
Staff Writer

If pure entertaining football could win conference championships, Duke would always be near the top. The Blue Devils have always been a fun team to watch, with a wide-open passing attack.

But while their offense has always put a lot of points on the scoreboard, a weak defense has usually allowed more points than the offense could muster. Over the past decade, the Blue Devils have come up on the short end of a 53-42 score too many times.

Much of the same can be expected in '84. Second-year coach Steve Sloan reflects much of those same sentiments.

"I think we will be exciting, but still a marginal football team," he said. "That means we should be able to play a lot of close games."

Duke graduated many key offensive players last spring. The likes of all-time NCAA passing champ Ben Bennett, wide receiver Mark Militello, Bennett's favorite target, and all-ACC center Phil Ebinger will be missed at Wallace Wade Stadium. But Sloan doesn't seem to be too concerned.

"Offensively the key will be replacing key people," Sloan said. "I think our young players can develop into a good offensive football team."

One reason for Sloan's lack of concern is a healthy quarterback situation. Even without Bennett, there is plenty of experience. Most of that experience comes from fifth-year senior Ron Sally, who split time with Bennett in 1981. Sally threw for 888 yards in '81, but found playing time scarce behind Bennett in '82 and '83.

Sally says he almost gave up on football last year, but wanted to come back and prove he can be a major college quarterback. He decided to take advantage of an extra year of eligibility due to a redshirt season earlier in his career.

But Sally might not get that chance. Sophomore Drew Walston, highly regarded by Sloan, hurt his chances for the starting job when he injured his shoulder in the final week of spring practice, but came in and won the job this fall.

The offensive backfield also looks solid. Although diminutive Mike Grayson has graduated, junior Julius Grantham is more than capable of replacing him. Grantham averaged 5.5 yards a carry last year for 556 yards while alternating with Grayson at tailback. Grantham is backed up by senior speedster Mike Atkinson and talented sophomore Mike Peacock. Senior Scott Sime takes over at fullback.

Duke will continue its tradition of talented receivers. Tight end Scott Russell, who had 47 catches to lead the team last year, heads up a fine cast.

The wide receivers are led by senior Gary Frederick, who had five TDs to go along with his 15 catches last year. Juniors Chuck Herring and Greg Flanagan and sophomore Doug Green all saw considerable action last year, so the Blue Devils are deep in the receiving corps.

The offensive line should be young, but experienced. Junior Ted Million (6-5, 265) and senior



With Ben Bennett out, Duke must find a new offense

Justin Beckett (6-3, 280) head up a solid group. The twin brother tandem of Mike and Mark Higgenbotham (both 6-3, 250) take over at guard. Sophomore Paul Constantino (6-2, 245) will be the center.

Duke, in recent years known for a pro-style passing attack, may try something a little different this year on offense.

"We may go out and roll out, playing an action type of attack this season," Sloan said.

While Sloan isn't too worried about the offense, it's a different story on defense. Last year the Blue Devil defense allowed 435 yards in offense per game and a school record 350 points.

"I view our defensive improvement as most important," Sloan said. "Our biggest concern is playing defense on a higher level. We have to develop consistency and the big play."

The defense had a 4-3 alignment last year, but this season will switch to a 4-4. Sloan said much of the reason for the change is to benefit his younger players.

"Since we've recruited a lot of young defensive players, we think this will help them learn our system and stop the run," he said.

The Blue Devil front four will consist of junior tackles Murray Youmans (6-1, 245) and Reggie Andrews (6-0, 240). The ends will be manned by Harry Ward (6-2, 235) and David Adams (6-4, 245).

The linebacker position should be a Duke strength, with all four

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

1983 record: 3-8

Coach: Steve Sloan

Home field: Wallace Wade

Starters returning:

Offense(4): TE Scott Russell, WR Gary Frederick, OT Ted Million, OT Justin Beckett. Specialists: PK Ken Harper, P John Tolish.

Defense(8): DT Murray Youmans, DT Reggie Andrews, LB Nick Buoniconti, LB Ralph Alderman, LB Pete Stubbs, LB Mike Junkin, CB Joby Branion, CB Darryl Brunson.

Forecast: With only four home games and challenging schedule, this young team will have a tough time bettering last year's 3-8 mark. Again, the Blue Devils will generate enough offensive excitement to be worth the price of admission, but the wins will be few and far between. Prediction: Seventh in ACC.

starters coming back. That contingent is led by junior Nick Buoniconti, who at 5-10, 178 led the team in tackles last season, not to mention heart. If that name sounds familiar, it should. His dad of the same name was an all-pro with the Miami Dolphins during their Super Bowl years.

Rounding out the linebacking slots are senior Ralph Alderman (6-3, 212), junior Pete Stubbs and

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Mike Eppley was one of the highest-rated passers last year.

Ford doesn't comment on Clemson probation

By MICHAEL SCHOOR
Staff Writer

Clemson football coach Danny Ford will use a bevy of Southern colloquialisms to answer a question about someone or something. But when the mood strikes him, he'll issue a terse "No comment."

Is the ACC out to get you? Do some of the conference schools have it in for your program?

"No comment," Ford drawled in response to both.

Clemson, 30-2-2 over the past three seasons, is a football powerhouse and deserving of its Top 10 national ranking. Clemson has experienced players at most positions, a winning tradition and a loyal fundraising machine.

Clemson is ineligible for television games, the ACC championship and any bowl competition.

Clemson is on probation. "We're not in a conference championship race and we're not concerned," Ford said.

The ACC's restraints on the season didn't cause any preseason attitude problems, Ford said. The heat did.

"Everybody has motivational problems with two or three practices a day in 100-degree weather," he said. "Football's not fun with no opponent coming up."

"The only motivational problems we had was not blocking too well."

Who would want to block 6-3, 305-pound middle guard William Perry, anyway? Perry is everybody's All-American and everybody's favorite Frigidaire.

"In basketball, everybody wants a big 'ol tall guy to dominate," Ford said. "William is like a seven-foot basketball player. He can change a team's offensive game plans."

Perry must anchor an inexperienced defensive line, which returns only one other starter, right end Terrence Mack.

"We're going to get whipped some and give up some long runs," Ford said.

Offensively, the Tigers return nine starters, including quarterback Mike Eppley. Eppley, the NCAA's third most efficient passer in 1983, will throw to All-ACC tight end K.D. Dunn and hand off to backs Stacey Driver or Kenny Flowers.

Senior Dale Hatcher returns for a fourth season of punting. Ford calls him "one of the best ever to kick a ball."

CLEMSON TIGERS

1983 record: 9-1-1

Coach: Danny Ford

Starters returning: Offense (9)-

LT Reid Ingle, C Dale Swing,

RG Andy Cheatham, RT Jeff

Cruce, SE Terrance Roulhac,

QB Mike Eppley, TE K.D. Dunn,

TB Stacey Driver, FL Shelton

Boyer.

Defense (7)- MG William Perry,

DE Terrence Mack, LB Eldridge

Milton, LB Henry Walls, CB

Tyrone Davis, FS Ronald

Watson, P Dale Hatcher.

Forecast: Clemson is loaded.

Virtually all skill-position

players are back and Kenny

Flowers has moved from

tailback to fullback. Perry

anchors an inexperienced

defensive line, but the Tigers

have few other weaknesses.

Strong kicking game. Look for

them in the top 10. Prediction:

Ineligible for ACC

championship.



Danny Ford

Hatcher and Perry have played in all 34 Clemson games over the past three seasons. They've played in one bowl game, the 1982 Orange Bowl, helping Clemson to a national championship.

Clemson's 1984 team may be just as good as that 1981 national title squad. "I don't know that this football team is going to win yet," Ford said.

After two ridiculously easy wins over Appalachian State (40-7) and Virginia (55-0), Ford should have a pretty good idea about his team's status. Namely, that they probably won't be beaten this year.

"But remember, our games don't count," Ford said.