

Tigers talented enough to convert easy slate into ACC title, unbeaten season

By **ANDREW PODOLSKY**
Staff Writer

Coming off a 1986 season that brought them an 8-2-2 record and a ninth ACC Championship, the Clemson Tigers already appear well on track to cop yet another league title.

Actually, Clemson may be aiming too low if it sets its sights solely on the conference. That's because the Tigers in 1987 will play perhaps the easiest major college schedule in America, next, of course, to SMU. The opponents Clemson will face this year were a less than glittering 64-55-7 last year, which is rather poor competition for a team that boasts of its chances for the national championship.

By scheduling eight of their 11 games in dreaded Death Valley, the Tigers could realistically coast through this season with one loss. In fact, the only ACC game the Tigers will not play at home will take place on November 7, when they will journey to Chapel Hill to take on UNC. Before that game, Clemson will have played six consecutive home games.

Last season, the Tigers dropped

games to Virginia Tech and N.C. State en route to their 8-2-2 mark, gaining them a slot in the Gator Bowl against 17th-ranked Stanford. Despite falling asleep in the second half of that game, the Tigers hung on to defeat the Cardinal 27-21, taking Stanford's spot in the polls for themselves. Highlights from last season included a 38-10 drubbing of North Carolina in Death Valley, and of course the ACC championship.

Although 15 starters from a year ago return, Clemson lost seven seniors to graduation. The most important losses were at the vital tailback position. Kenny Flowers, the all-time leading rusher in Clemson history with 2,914 yards, and All-American Terrence Flagler, ninth on the list with 2,162 yards, are now gone. Their heirs apparent in the backfield will have to come from a smorgasbord of underclassmen long on energy but short on experience. Freshman Terry Allen looks to be the best.

Anchoring the backfield and expected to provide the offensive leadership is junior quarterback Rodney Williams. Although he is not one of the ACC's most prolific passers, he does the job of running the option admirably. Williams has been the Tigers' starting signal caller the past 20 games.

Williams will be throwing to a receiving corps which now resembles a barren wasteland, as each of 1985's top four pass catchers are gone. Terrance Roulhac, fifth on the all-time receiving list, and Ray Williams, seventh on the list, will be the most sorely missed. Coach Danny Ford is reported to have a couple aces up his sleeve, though, with sophomores Gary Cooper and Ricardo Hooper turning in excellent preseason performances.

The rest of the offense looks rock solid. Returning first-team All-American John Phillips leads an extremely deep front line. All five offensive linemen from last year return, and combine for a total weight of 1,090 pounds. It should go without saying that they form one of the best

lines in the country.

Three lettermen are back at the tight end slot, hoping to fill the shoes of one of Clemson's greatest tight ends ever, Jim Riggs. Collectively, though, the three have caught but one pass. James Coley and Jerome Williams should split duties this year.

Clemson returns most of the ACC's top-ranked defense. The weakest link in that extremely taut defense will be the secondary. "We need depth in the secondary to go along with some outstanding starters," Ford said.

Gone is standout Deaton Hall, but junior Donnell Woolford is one of the better cornerbacks in the nation. Sophomore James Lott, coming off a busy year as a utility man, can hold his own at the other corner.

The safety slots will be well covered by returning starter Gene Beasley and an aggressive suicide squad member from a year ago, Richard Smith.

The Tiger linebackers will be headed by junior Henry Carter and will feature Vince Taylor, Norman Hayes and Duane Walker. All saw extensive action last year. In the unlikely event a ball carrier makes it through the front line, these guys will shut him down. The staunchest part of the Clemson defense is its notorious front line. The defensive linemen come in three sizes: big, bigger and immense. All-American candidate and aptly nicknamed "Little Fridge" senior Michael Dean Perry, brother of William, heads up the front line.

Next to Perry will be middle guard Tony Stephens, and Otis Moore and Raymond Chavous as tackles. James Earle will gobble anyone else that tries to make it around his defensive end positions. For the record, these top five have a combined weight of 1,380 pounds.

It's safe to say that every year Clemson has an interesting special teams unit. Each August, Ford invites students to come and try to fulfill his quest for a punter. The kicking game, on the other hand, rests surely on the foot of senior David Treadwell, one of the best in the nation.

Blue Devils welcome Spurrier as head coach

By **PATTON McDOWELL**
Assistant Sports Editor

The cry from nearby Durham is "Air ball," and no, it's not Duke's obnoxious basketball fans chanting at an errant jump shot.

Coach Steve Spurrier enters Durham as the Blue Devils' new coach for 1987, but the confines of Wallace Wade Stadium are nothing new to the 1966 Heisman Trophy winner.

Spurrier was an assistant coach for three seasons, from 1980-1982, before leaving the Duke program on good terms for the greener pastures of the USFL. Little did Spurrier know that the meadows of that other pro football league, as well as his Tampa Bay Bandits, would dry up faster than a slug in bright sunlight.

The former coach had not forgotten his days in Durham, however, and neither had the university. Spurrier is generally given credit as the driving force behind Duke's consecutive 6-5 seasons in 1981 and 1982, the first such winning records for the Blue Devils since 1974.

In his own playing days, Spurrier achieved fame as a passer, and the Blue Devils' present quarterback is glad to have a coach with a passing mentality.

"When somebody who's won the Heisman comes in and says 'Do it this way,' you don't challenge him, you listen," senior quarterback Steve Slayden said.

The only challenges Slayden should pose will be to the Duke record book. The starting quarterback for the past 2½ seasons, Slayden enters his senior campaign third on the all-time Blue Devil list, with 469 completions in 809 attempts, for 5,080 yards.

Slayden has just what he needs in terms of wide receivers as he assaults the record books. Senior Doug Green has been anything but green as he has led the ACC twice in receptions. If Slayden throws

as much as expected, Green could very well get the 53 receptions he needs to become Duke's all-time leading receiver.

Tight end Jason Cooper should make another attractive target for the "Airball" offense, as well as speedster Clarkston Hines. Hines, a high school All-American three years ago, has finally eluded the injuries that have plagued him for two seasons.

When the occasion does arise for "Airball" to be temporarily grounded, Slayden will grudgingly hand the ball to starting fullback Eric Sanders or tailback Roger Boone. The tailback position does have considerable depth if Boone should falter. Senior Stanley Monk, junior Wayne Charles and freshman Randy Jones will all push for playing time in the backfield.

The Duke defense may have taken a back seat to the offense in the pre-season hoopla, but the squad returns 10 of 11 starters. The lone graduate did happen to be All-American linebacker Mike Junkin, and the defense will have a tough time replacing the Blue Devils' career leader in tackles.

While it seems likely that no one of Junkin's caliber will emerge in 1987, the Blue Devil defensive responsibility will be to collectively overcome his absence. Senior Jim Godfrey will attempt to fill Junkin's shoes.

Spurrier and the Duke fans are excited about the prospects for the 1987 campaign. With a relatively light first half of the schedule, the Blue Devils could very well have five wins after as many weeks. If the team, and especially Slayden, can remain injury-free, the Duke students will get an opportunity to really warm up on their "Air ball" cheer. Only this time they will be yelling at their own team.

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