

N.C. State

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"It would be a mistake to put any pressure on Anthony, and we won't from our standpoint," Sheridan said. "Anthony will have an impact on our program, but we won't expect him to perform any miracles this season. We try not to count on any freshman."

When faced with the choice of rushing a freshman or suffering through another losing season, look for Sheridan to get the ball to Mr. Barbour as much as possible. A green freshman may be an improvement over anyone Sheridan could give the ball to last year.

Barbour will join an offense that averaged just 19.3 points per game last year. The problems of last season were no mystery. The Wolfpack averaged less than three yards per running play for the season.

Leading rusher Mal Crite (463 yards), a fullback, will be counted on to carry the ball and clear the way for Barbour and untested tailbacks Todd Varn and Chris Williams. Center Chuck Massaro, a strong All-America candidate, will bring his 6-3, 253-pound frame at defenders with a vengeance, but he'll need help to open holes for Barbour and Crite to attack.

Massaro will be snapping the ball to the quarterback combination of Preston Poag and Shane Montgomery. Sophomore Poag, who guided State to a 30-28 upset over seventh-ranked Clemson in Death Valley last year, figures to get the call. Montgomery, who overcame a slow start last year, finished very impressively, throwing for a school-record 468 yards against Duke and 402 against Virginia. He'll be ready, should Poag falter.

Once again, the 'Pack will have to go to the air to pull out a few victories, and they won't be looking for the Big Bad Wolf in the sky. They are counting heavily on speedy wideouts Nasrallah Worthen and Danny Peebles to be on the receiving end of the Poag/Montgomery aeriels, hoping to stretch defenses to make room for shorter patterns by their backs and tight ends. The big boost is the return of Worthen, a former all-conference selection who was red-shirted last year. "Naz is Naz," says Sheridan. "He gives us a big-play threat. He definitely adds another dimension."

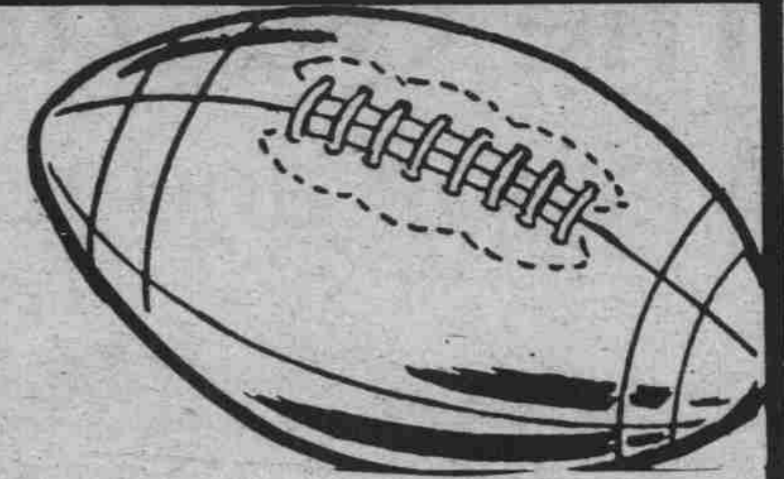
Even if they improve offensively, N.C. State could be looking at some last-minute losses if it doesn't get some help on the other side of the ball.

The good news for the Wolfpack is that seven defensive starters return from last year. The bad news is that these guys thought of de-fense as something you put up around de-yard.

Seniors Scott Auer and Michael Brooks need some help around them to contend with the powerful offenses they will face this year. Auer, a 6-3, 227-pound linebacker, will have freshmen and sophomores around him who must mature in a hurry. Brooks, who led the team with 105 tackles and five interceptions last year, must pull together an experienced, but inconsistent, secondary.

The keys for the Wolfpack in 1988 will be its defense and running game. The defense will be a year stronger and a year wiser. The offense will have Anthony Barbour and a parade of speedsters. But will it be enough?

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