

BLANKED: Rattlers shut out Rams 23-0



Photo by Garrett Garms

Rams defensive linemen Kevin Dorsey Jr. puts a swim move on a Morgan State defender in a game earlier this season.

BY SHARROD PATTERSON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Fresh off their first win of the 2008 season, Winston-Salem State rolled south to Tallahassee, Fla. on Oct. 9 to take on Florida A&M.

The Rams headed into Bragg Stadium in front of 15,000 plus fans looking to take the series lead against FAMU.

Unfortunately for the Rams, momentum wouldn't fit on the bus.

The Rams were shut out for the first time since 1996 when North Carolina Central overpowered them 28-0 in Durham.

The more important thing is that the Rams suffered this loss to FAMU in front of a multitude of people on ESPNU. Last time the Rams faced the Rattlers was last season in another big-time game in Indianapolis, in the Circle City Classic where the Rams beat the Rattlers 27-23 in a game aired nationally on the NFL Network.

The Rams (1-4) set out to establish the run but found out early that the Rattlers (5-2, 1-2 MEAC) would not budge on the line of scrimmage holding the Rams to 45 yards rushing on 24 carries.

The Rams then looked to start where they finished against Howard by going to the air.

Quarterback Jarrett Dunston completed only 5 of 17 passes for 36 yards, and the Rams had no outlet for offensive production.

Luckily for the Rams cornerback/punter Jamaine Mack had the golden foot. Mack punted 10 times averaging just less than 40 yards a punt with a long of 53 yards.

The Rams were terrible in every facet on offense mustering a dismal 81 yards of total offense and just four first downs the entire game. The defense did all it could to prevent the Rattlers from putting the game out of reach early.

The Rattlers held the ball for 40 minutes of a 60-minute game against the young defense of the Rams. The Rattlers completed 24 of 33 passing gaining 289 yards in the air with no interceptions and rushed for 145 yards on 41 carries for combined total of 434 yards of total offense.

The Rattlers had 26 first downs and punted five times. The Rams' performed reasonably well, given the offense's ineffectiveness.

The Rams will have a chance to put this loss behind them and put their focus on the Wildcats of Bethune-Cookman during Homecoming 2008 on Oct. 25.

MEAC basketball season preview, predictions

By STEVEN J. GAITHER
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The MEAC marched into Winston-Salem on Oct. 15 for its annual preseason Media Day, bringing plenty of questions along with it.

How will North Carolina A&T, projected to win the women's championship, rebound from last season's stunning loss to Coppin State in the tournament finals? How will Morgan State stay on top despite losing the conference's defensive and overall players of the years of the year, as well as its' starting point guard from last year's team?

Even Morgan State coach Todd Bozeman seemed a little confused.

"I think we need a recount," Bozeman joked at the podium during the luncheon session.

Despite the aforementioned losses from last season's team which went 22-11 and earned an invitation to the NIT, the Bears appear to be the favorites to win the conference crown in 2009. The Bears will look to Marquis Kately and Reggie Holmes to build on last year and represent the MEAC in the NCAA Tournament.

Kately, a 6-foot-5 forward

from Baltimore, finished second in scoring to MEAC Player of the Year Jamar Smith for the Bears last season, averaging 13.1 points and six rebounds per game.

"He's a talented player that can play four positions for us," Boozeman said. Holmes, a shooting guard with a sweet touch, finished third on the team in scoring last season, averaging 12.9 points per game.

On the women's side, North Carolina A&T coach Patricia Cage-Bibbs is confident that her team can recover from last season's disappointing finish. The Aggies ran through MEAC competition with an unblemished record until the regular season finale against Hampton. They were still favored to win the conference tournament but fell just short, losing to Coppin State in the championship game.

"We had a great run," Cage-Bibbs said. "The question now is what are we going to do with this unfin-

ished business?"

The Aggies look to be in good shape, returning all five starters from last year's team.

Last season, Coppin State rallied from a 4-19 start to win 12 of their last 14 games, including the conference championship game against Morgan State. The Eagles return preseason conference player of the year Tywain McKee and not much else.

"Once we get past him [McKee], everything else is questionable," he said. "It's gonna take a lot from the unknown."

Perhaps the biggest uncertainty surrounding the conference is whether or not Winston-Salem will help grow the conference's basketball tournament. The tournament moves to the Twin City after spending the last three years in Raleigh. The tournament will be held at the Lawrence-Joel Coliseum March 9-14.

Bozeman said that he is looking forward to this season's tournament.

"We're excited about having the tournament here in Winston-Salem," he said. "We look forward to coming back and having a good time."

2008-09 MEAC Men's Basketball Preseason Prediction as voted on by the league's head coaches and sports information directors (First Place Votes in parenthesis)

1. Morgan State (15)
2. Hampton (2)
3. Delaware State
4. Norfolk State (1)
5. South Carolina State (2)
6. Coppin State (1)
7. Florida A&M
8. North Carolina A&T (1)
9. Howard
10. Bethune-Cookman
11. Maryland E. Shore

2008-09 MEAC Women's Basketball Predicted Order of Finish As voted on by the leagues head coaches and sports information directors (First place votes in parenthesis)

School	Points
1. North Carolina A&T (18)	468
2. Delaware State	378
3. Morgan State	364
4. Coppin State (2)	316
5. Hampton (1)	291
6. Maryland Eastern Shore (1)	283
7. South Carolina State	192
8. Florida A&M	196
9. Howard	92
10. Bethune-Cookman	76
11. Norfolk State	68

