

How 'bout a Ram-Aggie homecoming?

Homecoming for the Rams is scheduled for Oct. 31, but Sept. 5 should've been the real one.

When Winston Salem State took the field against cross-town foe, North Carolina A&T the Saturday before Labor Day



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in front of a capacity of 22,000, the conflict for WSSU sharing the annual southern tradition with the rival Aggies became more evident throughout that contest.

Everything about this game said homecoming except for the date.

It's no secret A&T's homecoming generates a buzz, and since 2005 WSSU has averaged 15,640 people in attendance.

Not only was there more in attendance at the Sept. 5 game, but there was also more tailgating, and if it would have been the actual homecoming, there could have been more opportunity of profits for WSSU. A&T's homecoming game Oct. 31 begins at 2 p.m. and WSSU's begins at 4 p.m. This will essentially cause a financial hindrance to the University, especially because the two schools are within a 30-mile

radius of each other.

This game versus the Aggies was also an opportunity to see both the "Blue and Gold Marching Machine" and the "Red Sea of Sound" bands take the field in a very electrifying halftime show. Both paid unique tributes to Michael Jackson, although WSSU's entire performance featured tunes from the late King of Pop. Seeing both during a homecoming game would be another benefit to having the teams face off on homecoming.

And because that game was played during Labor Day weekend, it was a great way to end the summer.

Who knows?

Maybe this tradition will continue, and WSSU will play A&T every Labor Day especially since The Aggie-Eagle Classic is no longer in rotation.

But wouldn't it be even better if they played each other for a homecoming match-up instead?

With their homecomings being scheduled on the same day this year, sharing this eventful day could possibly continue in the future. So to resolve overlapping them again, each team should schedule the other team for its homecoming and alternate as host each year. With the attendance, this would certainly increase



Photo courtesy of Garrett Garms
Rams' quarterback, senior Jarrett Dunston (no. 8) attempts a pass against N.C. A&T Sept. 5 at Bowman-Gray Stadium. The Aggies defeated the Rams in a close game 19-10.

revenue. It would also solve the concern in wondering who will be the opponent that day and since this is the most anticipated game on both teams' schedule.

Having them face off at

homecoming will only bring more intensity to the battle.

Having one team become the opponent in the other team's homecoming contest would alleviate the competition issue.

The proximity of these

schools causes conflict for those who want to participate in both schools' events. But if you did want to attend both this year, what can you do, flip a coin?

Dunston named starter; Rams fall to 0-2

LATASHA MILES
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After a competition for the starting position at quarterback, senior Jarrett Dunston was selected as the team's signal caller.

Freshman Jordan Reid from High Point Andrews and red shirt freshman Branden Williams were the other contenders for the starter.

Coach Alan Hall, from Savannah State University, took over as the Rams offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in April said that many things went into consideration. Hall said he thought that Dunston deserved it and that he went out and earned it. "Jarrett was here all summer working out and training with his other teammates," Hall said.

"He [Dunston] was in here looking at film and preparing himself mentally and physically going into camp as the starter, and he assumed the role. He took it, and he never really let it go." Hall also said that injuries played a part in deciding on the starter.

"Compile [the decision] with Jordan getting hurt and Branden also having some nagging injuries during camp, they both missed some practice time," Hall said.

"Jarrett just kind of ran away with it."

Dunston completed 45.6 percent of his passes in his 2008 campaign. He threw for 958 yards three touchdowns and 10 interceptions in 11 appearances, nine of which were starts.

On the offensive line, Dunston will be joined by other veterans on offense.

"Julian Gray is probably the leader up front at left tackle," Hall said when describing the protection for Dunston. "Nazir Levine, who's our starting center, can pretty much play just anywhere on the [offensive] line."

As for the skill positions, Dunston's supporting cast will include running backs Brandon McRae and

"He took it [quarterback position], and he never really let it go."
— Coach Alan Hall

transfer student from North Carolina State Cedric Hickman. Dominique Fitzgerald returns as a sophomore to lead the wide receiver corps.

"Probably the most talented position we have right now is at the running back spot with McRae returning and being 100 percent healthy," Hall said.

"Cedric will play in certain situations. We pick our spots to use him. You might see him in some short yardage situations we like to use. He's a good lead blocker because of his size and strength."

The Rams lost 13 seniors last year and are shifting into running the spread offense, which would have Dunston in the shotgun formation most of the time.

"Regardless if we're running spread or not, we still would like to keep it 50/50 [running and throwing the

ball]," Hall said.

"I think you have to be balanced in order to be successful." But an 0-2 start is not what was in mind for Hall.

"As a coach, you want to win every ball game," Hall said. The first loss, 19-10, came Sept. 5 from neighboring foe North Carolina A&T. The Rams compiled only 90 total yards but improved statistically in their second game against Florida A&M totaling 218 yards. However the Rattlers racked up 228 yards on special teams alone, and outlasted WSSU 38-10 on Sept. 10.

"I'm learning as I go as much as these kids are," Hall said.

"I hope to see us improve from week to week. We're going back to work in terms of getting better. We're going to have to alter some of the things we do. We went 3-8 last year, and I'd like to improve on that."

Another adjustment for the Rams is the transition in the training department.

Earlier this month, the heads of the training department for sports at WSSU, head trainer Darrell Turner and assistant trainer Sarah Muslin moved on to the United Football League. Former director of sports medicine at A&T has replaced Turner.

The game against FAMU was the last home game for WSSU until homecoming versus Hampton University at 4 p.m Oct. 31. The upcoming games for the Rams before returning to Bowman-Gray Stadium are against Morgan State, South Carolina State, Howard, University of California-Davis, and Bethune-Cookman. Their open date is Oct. 10.

Always Watching