

# Football team stumbles in first game at Rhodes Stadium

**Colin Donohue**  
Reporter

The Elon football team traveled to Greensboro last year and defeated North Carolina A&T, spoiling the Aggies' first-ever night game at home. Saturday, the Aggies returned the favor, defeating the Phoenix 23-7 in the first game ever played in Rhodes Stadium. But the Aggies claimed revenge was not on their minds.

"We weren't looking for revenge. I respect Elon's football team," Aggie head coach Bill Hayes said. Whether they were or not, the Aggies handed Elon its third straight loss, keeping the Phoenix winless this year.

President Leo Lambert opened the ceremonies with a ribbon-cutting by Dusty and Peggy Rhodes. "This fulfills a dream of 50 years. We finally get to play a home game on campus," Lambert said. The day was off to a ceremonious beginning, but would end in disappointment.

Linebacker Kelsie Langston acknowledged the fact that this match-up has become a rivalry, but they prepare the same way, rivalry or not. "It was the little things, and those little things add up to big plays." And it was those little things that eventually thwarted the Phoenix's chances of winning.

The Phoenix's (0-3) continued their inability to generate a passing game, while giving up too much in the air to the opposition. After the

game, Elon head coach Al Seagraves noted there was no quick fix. "I have three major concerns right now," he said. "No. 1, we have to play smart football. Right now, we're not playing smart football. No. 2, we must play together as a team if we're going to win a game. And No. 3, we're not playing to an excellent standard." Langston added, "We didn't see anything today that we didn't see before."

A&T (2-0) elected to receive the opening kickoff, and the new era of Rhodes Stadium had begun.

The Aggies opening six-minute drive was highlighted by running back Maurice Hicks' (21 carries, 158 yards) 22-yard run, putting the Aggies deep in Elon territory. Damian Phillips (13-17, 213 yards) quickly silenced the crowd of 10,450 with a one-yard quarterback sneak to put the Aggies up early.

Elon's first drive at Rhodes Stadium ended after a turnover on their first play from scrimmage. Aggie cornerback intercepted quarterback C.W. Singletary's pass and returned it 30 yards to the Elon 40-yard line. The Phoenix defense stepped up as linemen C.J. Habersham and David McCallum sacked Phillips on key second- and third- down plays, forcing A&T to punt.

Elon's second drive featured a 30-yard run by fullback Martin Swindell (13 carries, 120 yards) and a 17-yard scamper by Singletary. However, the Phoenix's 40-yard field goal attempt

was no good, giving A&T possession once again.

The Aggies brought the ball down the field for a 27-yard field goal to push their lead to 10-0 with 8:57 remaining in the first half.

Seagraves replaced Singletary with quarterback Scott Stevens for the team's third drive. The junior completed Elon's first pass of the day, a 10-yard pass to tight end Phillip Johnson. From there, Rashaud Palmer (6 carries, 25 yards) ran 15 yards into the endzone to score Elon's first touchdown in Rhodes Stadium history.

"I told Mr. Rhodes on my first recruiting visit here that I'd score the first touchdown," Palmer said after the game. Kicker Beau Wegmann tacked on the extra point, bringing the Phoenix to within 3 points. "We were fortunate to be at 10-7 going into the half as sloppily as we played," Seagraves said.

Elon took the ball in the second half headed again by Singletary after Stevens suffered a concussion at the end of the first half. The Phoenix's drive went nowhere, and Elon was forced to punt. A long punt allowed the Elon special teams to down the ball at the A&T one-yard line.

It seemed the Phoenix had stolen the game's momentum. But the Aggies took the ball 99 yards for a score. Hicks had five carries for 40 yards during the drive. Phillips ended



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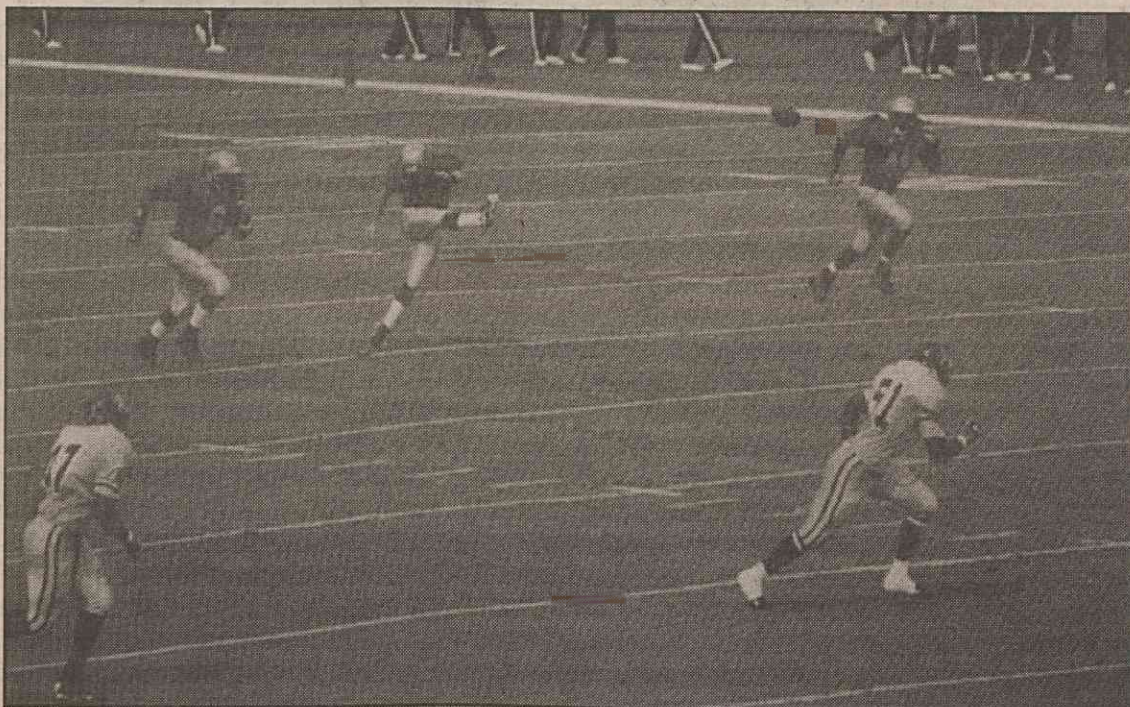
An Elon receiver jumps between two defenders for the grab.

the possession with a 12-yard pass to wide receiver Jamal Jones, who leaped over Elon cornerback Jamal Abdur-Raheem to increase the Aggies' lead to 17-7.

Frustration began to set in as Elon wide receiver Arketa Banks received a personal foul after Elon failed to convert on third down, forcing the Phoenix to punt. A&T finished the third quarter with the ball already in

Elon territory.

The Aggies opened the fourth quarter in a five-receiver set, from which Phillips completed passes of 12 and 11 yards to Steve Shipp and Hicks before finally scrambling for the score. Phillips received a personal foul after the play, backing up the extra point attempt 15 yards; the kick sailed wide left, resulting in the final score of 23-7.



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Beau Wegmann boots the ball to the A&T special teams to begin the Rhodes Stadium tradition.

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