

Sports

Focus follows Phoenix through spring practices in 2009

Monday's practice marks first of 15 for spring season

Pam Richter
Sports Editor

The 2008 Elon football season marked several firsts for the program. The 8-4 record the team posted was its best in nine years. It was the first time that an Elon team defeated three top-25 FCS opponents in a season. And the team finished ranked 17th in the FCS polls.

While the team failed to make a postseason appearance, head coach Pete Lembo said there were some good things the team is looking to build off of from the year before.

"It felt like we just got off the field in November last week," Lembo said. "It's good to feel like you were when you left off."

Monday's practice was the first of the 15 scheduled for the team in the spring session. All these practices lead up to the spring game at 3 p.m. on April 25.

"The game is the last major evaluation before preseason camp begins," Lembo said. "It's the last chance to recreate game-like conditions prior to the middle of August."

The team has many goals this season that tie into the team's overall motto of focus.

"We start off the season playing well, and at the end we can't focus. We have to focus this year," junior wide receiver Terrell Hudgins said.

Hudgins is the all-time Elon and SoCon leader in receptions in a season (117 last year), receptions in a career (272), receiving yards in a career (3,617) and touchdown receptions in a career (36).

Elon finished the 2008 season with a 26-3 loss to Liberty and finished just short of a postseason appearance.

"I think (the motto is) fitting because it's about living in the moment and staying focused on task at hand, not looking beyond the moment and just trying to reach potential at that given time," Lembo said.

He said the goal of spring practices is to go from good to great. He expects the team to get 10 to 15 percent better in every area of the game.

It was also the first time that sophomore quarterback Scott Riddle took the field since he announced that he would play baseball for the Phoenix this season.

He said it felt good to get back out on the field again and estimates in a few more days he'll be back "up to par."

"It was fun getting out here competing with the defense," Riddle said. "Everyone talks a big game during the offseason and it was fun competing again."

In his first two seasons with Elon, Riddle already has broken numerous records. He is the all-time Elon leader in passes completed in a career (609), passes attempted in a career (935), passing yards in a career (6,688) and touchdown passes in a career (55).

Riddle made a personal goal for himself during the spring practices - do not throw an interception. He said the team has goals as well.

"Another goal is just getting everyone on the same page to achieve our team goal, which is the Southern Conference championship," Riddle said.



ABOVE
Freshman receiver Darius McQueen looks to run past an Elon defender during spring practice. Last season, McQueen missed the majority of the season because of an injury.

LEFT
Freshman defensive end Rashaun Byrd looks to hit the blocking bags during spring practice. The team has its spring game on April 25.

BRYCE LITTLE | Staff Photographer

Rainy weather causes troubles for the Phoenix



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Junior Phil Bartholomew looks on before his shot. Bartholomew shot a total of 159 at last weekend's Furman Intercollegiate tournament for the Phoenix.

Sam Calvert
Assistant Sports Editor

The Elon men's golf team encountered storms, both on the course and off, this weekend as it competed in the Furman Intercollegiate Tournament on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The tournament was cut from its original 56 holes to 36 holes after the second round on Saturday was canceled because of rain.

Head coach Bill Morningstar gave no excuses for his team's play.

"The weather is a factor with the way a lot of people play, but everybody had to play in the weather, and everyone had to play the same golf course," Morningstar said.

The Phoenix (321, 311 — 632) tied with Presbyterian College for 17 overall, behind conference foes Furman (596), Wofford College (614), Appalachian State (621), Samford (622), Western Carolina (623) and Davidson College (626). East Carolina (595) came in first.

Junior Jayson Judy (tied-73 80, 79 — 159) and Phil Bartholomew (tied-73 82, 77 — 159) led Elon at +15, followed by juniors Stephen Dressel (tied-84 81, 79 — 160), Scott Hockemeyer (tied-84 84, 76 — 160) and Michael Fekete (tied-101 78, 85 — 163).

"We were supposed to be taking it to the next

level, but it looks like we've been going the back way this spring," he said. "But hopefully we'll get it turned around by the conference tournament."

The team has one more tournament before the Southern Conference tournament April 19-21.

The Phoenix will play in the Palisades Collegiate Classic, co-hosted by UNC Charlotte and Davidson College, to take place on April 13 and 14 in Charlotte, N.C.

The players are trying to work on their course management by playing more on the course instead of just the practice facilities, Morningstar said.

"We need to get it so that they can get it in the hole instead of worrying about how they are hitting it," Morningstar said.

The team is also working on its confidence levels. "If they start playing better when we are out here qualifying and start getting a little bit of confidence I think we'll be OK," Morningstar said.

The team has three weeks to get ready for the conference tournament and is looking to excel more than it has done so far this season.

According to Morningstar, the men's team just needs to put all the pieces together.

"I think when you get in a slump and aren't playing well, it just carries over," he said. "But we are hoping to get something going and get some confidence to get this thing turned around."