



SITTING DOWN WITH SCOTT RIDDLE

Sam Calvert
Sports Editor



LINDSAY FERRELL | Sports Editor

Q: What thoughts are running through your head knowing this is your last season with the Phoenix?

A: I'm really excited. I've had a decent career and made some great friends. I've really enjoyed the journey. I've been a part of Elon for a while, so I've seen where it was years before and that every year it has gotten better. I'm hoping to come out and have a 10-win season and make some noise in the playoffs, with a lot of bullets flying.

Q: How have you changed since the first time you took a snap for Elon?

A: When I first got here, I sort of winged everything -- I just tried to throw it to whoever was open and get down the field. But each year I've progressed in my knowledge. It's kind of become easier for me.

Q: What goes through your mind when you take the field for a game?

A: I don't know, it's kind of a blank feeling. I'm ready to go. I like when the defense goes out there first. I go out there relaxed. I'm not one of those guys who gets over-pumped.

Q: What was it like to be the team's leader as quarterback and primary punter last season?

A: I don't mind it. I've handled the ball so many times in my career that they thought I would do well in that position. John Reece is doing a good job

this year, though. But I liked it. If I had a bad series, it gave me a way to go and take all my frustration out. I could just go out there and kick it as hard as I could.

Q: Will you miss being able to look down the field and see Terrell Hudgins as a target this season?

A: He told me not to act like everything was fine without him. But really, I'm going to miss him. He was an easy guy to throw it up to. But I love my man No. 4 Lance Camp. We've been together four years now. And we have a lot of other guys at wide receiver I trust, too. We've got all kinds of weapons. This year they're not going to be able to single out one guy.

Q: How does it feel to be on the Walter Payton watch list to start out the season?

A: It's nice getting recognition for my accomplishments, but anyone who is successful is there because of the team around him. I'm not worrying about it too much. But I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to win it.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in your last season?

A: I did win a ring in baseball, which was a really special thing that I want all of my teammates to be able to experience as well. Like other players on the team, I expect that. To win the National Championship, a lot of things have to go right. Our main focus is on winning the conference.

IT'S A NEW YEAR:



Football looks to the future, not dwelling on past

Sam Calvert
Sports Editor

On a chilly day at the end of November, the Elon University football team made school history when it took the field against the University of Richmond in the first round of the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs. The 2009 team was the first ever to make the FCS postseason, with an at-large bid after finishing 9-2 overall and second-place 7-1 in the Southern Conference.

But while this great accomplishment was not to go unnoticed, several players on the 2010 squad said they will not let this one accomplishment define who the Phoenix is for the new season.

"We're happy about it, but we're not dwelling in the past," junior linebacker Joshua Jones said.

Sophomore defensive back Dale Riley agreed, noting the importance of looking to the upcoming competitors.

But the success will not be completely forgotten, head coach Pete Lembo said.

"For three years, we've talked to our players about how special getting to that plateau would be," he said. "Now they know exactly what we're talking about. Experience is a great motivator."

Knowing what it took to get to the FCS postseason will help the team in preparing for this season, Lembo said.

Winning isn't the only feeling the Phoenix will take away from last season

as motivation though, senior quarterback Scott Riddle said.

"Everyone on this team -- except the freshmen -- knows what it feels like to lose a game in the playoffs," he said. "We don't want to feel like that again."

Going into the 2010 season, the team has been ranked in the top-10 in six different polls -- as low as No. 9 in the AnyGivenSaturday.com FCS College Football Rankings and as high as No. 6 in Phil Steele, Athlon and Lindy's top-25.

But Lembo said these rankings are based on past performances and don't reflect what the team will do in the coming season.

"If you're asking me, (the ranking) means nothing," Lembo said. "I hope it means nothing to the team, as well."

Lembo said he's more concerned about preparing the team for the upcoming season, focusing on its goals and not on what other people are saying.

"First and foremost, we have a long-term goal, which stays consistent every year," he said.

This is to win the SoCon and advance to the FCS playoffs.

Riley said the team believes it can do just that.

"We want to win everything," Riley said. "And we should be able to."

One thing the team has worked on this offseason is filling the holes left by those who played their last game in 2009.

"We lost a lot of guys last year, so everyone's been learning their role and perfecting the technique," senior running back Brandon Newsome said.

Because the team lost so many starters, Lembo said there were two matchups where the new configuration could either make or break the team.

"First, our offensive line. We lost three starters -- two four-year starters and one three-year starter. The ability to replace those guys is important," he said. "The second area is our secondary. We had four seniors, but we've got some young, talented defensive backs."

But Lembo said he thought the players were taking on their new roles well, both in these areas and in others across the entirety of the team.

"I think we got some good kids in the program, and a number of them have had the opportunity to step in and make their own mark," he said. "It's always exciting to see how guys respond."

One hole has caused more discussion than the rest: wide receiver Terrell Hudgins.

Hudgins broke nearly every record in the books on his way to a contract with the Dallas Cowboys in the NFL.

But Riddle said the team has plenty of other talented wide receivers to fill the gap, and it will be harder on opponents' defenses because they will not be able to single out one target.

Newsome also said Elon has the talent

at running back to balance the loss at wide receiver.

"Everyone keeps talking about Terrell Hudgins," Newsome said. "I think it's a blessing in disguise. We have a lot of depth at running back, and we keep getting better every day."

This progression will be tested in its first game of the year, Sept. 4, when the Phoenix travels to Durham.

"Our short-term goal is to beat Duke (University) in our season opener," Lembo said.

He pointed out that while the game plan for the Duke game will be different from others, the team will prepare in the same way.

"We approach every game the same way in terms of structure and intensity," Lembo said. "It's a lot about us, not about them. We believe in what we do and how we do it, whether it's an ACC, a SoCon or any other game."

The odds are against the Phoenix in taking on the ACC opponent, Riddle said, but the team has seen what happened when an FCS school went to Durham and took on the Blue Devils in their season opener.

The University of Richmond defeated Duke 24-16 to start last season, and Elon looks to do the same this year, beginning with its preparation.

"We're going to work as hard as we can," Riddle said. "We're going to practice like each team is the Carolina Panthers."