



In last year's game, Appalachian State University beat the Phoenix 34-31 despite senior quarterback Scott Riddle throwing for 394 yards and four touchdowns against the top-ranked Mountaineers. FILE PHOTO BY COREY GROOM

Against ASU, football hopes to capitalize on Furman upset

Zachary Horner
Assistant Sports Editor

After a loss at Wofford College put the Phoenix under .500 for the first time since its season-opening loss at Vanderbilt University, Elon University head coach Jason Swepson wanted to get back to that mark.

"I told the team after the (Wofford) game, 'Let's get to 5-5, and put all our chips in against App,'" he said.

The words proved to be prophetic, as the Phoenix defeated Furman University 41-34 Nov. 12. The Paladins were ranked No. 21 in the Football Championship Subdivision and had racked off three big wins against Wofford, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Appalachian State, who the Phoenix play this Saturday in Rhodes Stadium.

"People didn't expect us to win," redshirt sophomore Rasaun Rorie said. "All week we practiced, it just seemed different. We wanted to send the seniors out right."

One of those seniors, linebacker Joshua Jones, provided a key play by intercepting Furman quarterback Chris Forcier's fourth-quarter pass and returning it for a touchdown to make the score 41-27.

"Overall it was just a great game," Swepson said. "For the first time all year, the guys were excited for each other. We had some success early in the game running the football. That gave us

confidence up front in calling plays."

For the first time all season, the Phoenix had a running back rush for more than 100 yards. Senior A.J. Harris had 31 carries for 111 yards on the ground. Senior Dontay Taylor had 38 yards and a touchdown. Swepson pointed to the overall success of the offensive game plan.

"When you get off schedule, you have to start throwing the ball," he said. "The guys came out with determination to control the line of scrimmage. It's something that we talked about all year doing."

Along with outrushing the Paladins 163-65, Elon was led by junior quarterback Thomas Wilson, who completed 20 of 26 passes for 279 yards and four touchdowns, two to junior wide receiver Aaron Mellette, and one interception. Wilson was named the Southern Conference Offensive Player of the Week Monday for his performance.

"He's been playing at a high level all year," Swepson said of Wilson. "He's a gritty warrior out there who loves to throw the football and is not gun-shy."

The Phoenix will need both sides of the offense working Saturday against the No. 9 Mountaineers, who rank third in the SoCon in offensive yards per game and points per game. They have also beaten Elon in every game the teams have played since the Phoenix entered the SoCon in 2003.

"We can't let that 'A' on the jersey beat

us," Swepson said. "They're a physical football team. This is going to make or break our season."

Swepson understands the sad history for the Phoenix behind these games.

"Going into App State, I think Elon is desperate, thirsty for a win," he said. "I don't know if it's really a rivalry for them. It's us trying to get that first conference win over App State."

Swepson said the Furman win makes the App State game more special. It is Senior Day, and players such as Harris, Taylor, linebacker Zach Henderson, wide receiver Darrius McQueen and linebacker Joshua Jones are among the Elon players playing in their final collegiate game. The head coach is very confident.



Junior receiver Aaron Mellette had three touchdowns last year in Boone. FILE PHOTO BY COREY GROOM

"We're gonna beat them and we're going to do it the right way," Swepson said. "We're going to welcome them to Rhodes Stadium, we're going to lock the gates and we're gonna beat them up. We're going to make this our bowl game, our championship game, our Super Bowl."

Fans of both teams expected to fill stadium in yearly matchup

Andrew Wilson
Reporter

As football season ends for the Phoenix, the team has yet to play one of its biggest games of the year against in-state conference rival Appalachian State University. Since joining the Southern Conference in 2003, Elon hasn't defeated the Mountaineers in eight attempts.

Many Elon students want to see that streak end Nov. 19.

"It would be huge to beat App State," said junior Brian Sharnsky. "It would give us a winning record this season. It's all about respect though. We need a win for some respect in the rivalry."

Rhodes Stadium will be packed come Saturday when the Mountaineers, ranked No. 9 in the FCS, visit Elon. The two previous home games against App State were sold out, which also marked the two largest crowds in Rhodes Stadium history with a turnout of 13,100 in 2007 and 14,167 in 2009, said Tripp Pendergast, interim athletics ticket manager.

"If it's not a sellout, it will be very close," he said. Though thousands of tickets have already been sold for the upcoming game, not everyone in attendance will be cheering for the Phoenix.

"(Appalachian State fans) travel very well," Pendergast said. "They have such a strong fan base from Boone on over to the Raleigh-Durham area. A couple of years ago, there was a good amount of

black and gold in the stadium, but we're hoping this year we can turn that around and have a bit more maroon and gold in there."

The Elon athletics ticket office has taken measures to control the amount of Mountaineers fans in the stadium. Tickets for the game were made available to Phoenix Club members, season ticket holders and faculty and staff members before tickets were sold to members of the Elon and Boone communities. Student tickets have also been set aside for the game in hopes that Elon students come out in full force to support the home team. "We have set aside what we feel is enough student tickets in the stands," Pendergast said.

Once the seats in Rhodes have been claimed, there will be places for students in the grass seating of the stadium. Many tickets for the grassy areas will be set aside for students.

"One of the big keys for us is to not turn away a student at the door just because it is such a big time atmosphere, a big time game, and we want the students to enjoy the college experience and this game definitely," Pendergast said.

The game kicks off at 3 p.m. and it's expected to be an intense game for both Phoenix and Mountaineers fans.

"It will be a crowded atmosphere," Pendergast said. "I know that the two fan bases see this game as a huge rivalry, and I know they're going to bring some fans in, and I know our fans will be ready. It should be a great day for football."

Men's Soccer to play Coastal Carolina in NCAA tournament

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from junior forward Jordan Smith in the 42nd and 73rd minutes and another added on a penalty kick by junior midfielder Gabe Latigue in the 47th minute.

"I thought (Sunday) we came with a good game plan, and the players were executing it very well," Powell said. "We passed the ball well against a very good UNCG team and we capitalized on our chances to get a three goal lead."

UNCG, the tournament's top seed and defending champion, made a furious comeback attempt, scoring two goals in 60 seconds late in the second half to cut the Phoenix lead to one.

"UNCG, as the No. 1 seed, never gave up, kept playing to the very end," Powell said. "(They) actually scored two pretty good goals that made the last part of the game, the last eight minutes there, a little more nerve-racking."

With the win, Elon becomes only the second No. 6 seed to ever win the

SoCon tournament championship. The win gives the Phoenix an automatic bid to the College Cup, which starts Thursday at campus sites around the country and culminates at the Final Four in Hoover, Ala., Dec. 9-11.

The elation still hasn't sunk in for some, Smith said.

"(Making the NCAA tournament is) unreal. I don't believe it," Smith said. "It hasn't hit me yet that we won (Sunday) and are going to the NCAA tournament."

-Jordan Smith
JUNIOR FORWARD

with teammates Latigue and senior midfielder Nick Millington. Millington was also named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player.

With a win on Thursday against Coastal Carolina, Elon would advance to play the University of North Carolina, which enters the College Cup as the No. 1-ranked team in the country and the tournament's top seed.

"I think we can go as far as we want to go," Smith said. "This team has all the skill and capabilities to beat any team in the nation."