

In The Grandstand

By BOB CHAPMAN

Recently sports fans have viewed the Rocky Mount Senior High School football team with apprehension. With a memory of the past season when the Blackbirds suffered loss after loss, the fans are looking to the new head football coach with a watchful eye.

Most comments about the upcoming season have a note of optimism since the only way to go from the past season is up. A feeling of optimism springs, too, from the hope that Jim Tapp, who comes here as head coach after being assistant football coach at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Tapp's system seems on outward appearances to be simple. Continuous conditioning in every conceivable phase of the game have moulded a team from a bunch of raw recruits. Daily practice sessions include exercises, running, blocking practice, tackling drills, and many other drills.

But looking deeper into the makings of the 1967 team, there seems to be more than just brute strength. The desire to win and a willingness to back the new coach 100 percent has prevailed during practice sessions and in informal conversation. Coach Tapp has remarked that the boys are really beginning to look like a team.

This "winning attitude" will go a long way in keeping up the team's spirit. The attitude held by the boys is seen by Coach Tapp as one of the most important factors in winning. "We are small, slow, inexperienced, and few in number," he asserted. He added that if only these facts were examined, the season would be a tough one indeed.

Much of the faith that the new coach is placing in the Birds seems to be in their fine attitude. "If we can continue to develop this attitude of 'we can' and that 'we are going to win,' then everyone can be reassured win, lose or draw, we will have done a good job."

This willingness to win is not totally without a good backing. Coach Tapp has hinted that most of the offensive attack will be made with aerial attempts. He feels his passers are adequate to do a good job, but he has some worries about protection for the passer and about the receiver. He declared that protection will be an important factor in the new system.

An overall appraisal of the team notes that strength does not lie in any one slot, but the offense seems a little more predominant since most of the practices have been spent working on the offensive change.

Blackbirds Lose Opener

Predicted to win by many locals, the Blackbirds last Friday night failed to pull off what would have been a mild upset by falling at the hands of Williams of Burlington 19-2.

Although the visitors scored three times, the defense was actually much better than that indicates. Cornerback Ken Thompson, Captain Nick Wicker, and end Mike Viverette made repeated tackles, many un-assisted.

The offense, where Coach Jim Tapp had stated the balance of the game would lie was often ragged, and the expected ariel attack never had a chance to get off the ground. Quarterback Tommy Delbridge had some trouble with timing on center snaps, recovering his own bobbles three times.

The first quarter proved to be a sizing-up period, with the Blackbirds adjusting to Burlington's single-wing offense. The second time they had the ball, starting on the eight, the Birds moved well on runs by wingback Colin Murchison and halfback Buddy Edgerton, but had to punt from within their own territory.

On the second play following the punt the Birds' line play caused a fumble, but the ad-

vantage was lost when a Delbridge pass was picked off.

A Burlington drive highlighted the first half. It ended in a twenty yard scamper from the single-wing backfield, and a touchdown. The extra-point attempt was wide.

Mid-way the third quarter Clint Holt rambled 65 yards through the Blackbird defenders for a TD, and the 25 yard extra point kick raised the score to 13-0.

Delbridge then hit two consecutive passes for twenty yards, but the Birds were forced to punt. Charging hard down field to cover the punt, center Jim Hart hit the receiver as he retreated into the end zone. The two point safety was the Birds' only scoring move, and enabled them to get back into the game, since they still had possession of the ball. But as the fourth quarter began they were forced to punt.

From there on out the visitors dominated, using a pass interference penalty to move deep into Rocky Mount territory, and score on a one yard run.

The Birds lost the statistical battle. They trailed in first downs seven to nine. The offense netted 92 yards to Burlington's 194. Rocky Mount lost one fumble to the visitors two losses. Edgerton's seven punts averaged 34.2 yards, while Burlington punted twice for an average of 42 yards.

Coach Tapp said after the game that overall the Birds did a good job. He was proud of the effort of everybody. Rocky Mount outit them, but was hurt on several long plays. The Birds strongest point, ac-

ording to Tapp, was "The desire to play." He said it was the first time in quite a while that the Birds did not suffer an injury during a game, and injuries often are caused by half-hearted hitting.

Pleased with the entire team's effort, Coach Tapp refused to single out any individuals for comment. Looking forward to next week's game, Coach Tapp called the Birds' chances excellent. Playing a game has done the team good, and more consistent play can bring RMSH its first football victory in a long time.

Grid Roster

Player	Position
Jay Bobbitt	E
Mike Easley	E
Mike Viverette	E
Ernie Fleming	E
*Harry Threatt	E
*Tommy Cox	E
Ernie Murray	T
*Wayne Hall	T
Ricky Leonard	T
Steve Draper	T
*Ken Williams	T
*Russell Lee	T
R. L. Downing	T
Steve Parker	G
*Johnny Worrell	G
Dane May	G
Ed Griffin	G
Steve Shearin	G
Ross Horner	C
*Jim Hart	C
*Tommy Minges	C
Denny Allen	QB
Tommy Delbridge	QB
Page Lea	QB
*Bill Griffin	QB
Jimmy Roberts	HB
Billy Joyner	HB
*Rob Pitt	HB
*Buddy Edgerton	HB
Ken Thompson	WB
Colin Murchison	WB
*Nikki Wicker	WB
Kirby Carrington	FB
*Vince Joyner	FB

*—Denotes lettermen

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