

Titans' season comes to abrupt end

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

The 1997 football season at West Forsyth began with a lot of promise, but ended with a disappointing 10-7 loss last Friday night in Shelby in the opening round of the State 4-A playoffs.

The Titans' loss to Crest brought a bitter end to the careers of a group of seniors whom Coach Russell Stone described as "the most dedicated group we've had in several years."

West Forsyth finished the season with an 8-3 record, with all three losses coming by less than a touchdown.

Stone said his team had an excellent chance of knocking off Crest, last year's 4-A state champions, but didn't take advantage of opportunities.

"We got a chance to see one of the best programs in the state," Stone said. "We got a chance to experience their atmosphere, see their weight room and line up against some of the best players in the state."

The Titans held their own throughout the game. They had a chance to go ahead late in the second quarter, but squandered a golden opportunity.

After James Berry forced a short punt, the Titans got the ball inside Crest's 20 yard-line. They moved inside the 10 on a run by Shaun Williford, but a holding penalty backed them up beyond the 20.

Stone then called a draw play to put the ball in the middle of the field and set up a field goal, which would have tied the game at 3-3. But the Titan's ball-carrier fumbled the ball. Nearly all of the players had a chance to fall

on the ball in the pile on the muddied field. But the ball somehow rolled out and a Crest defender scooped it up and raced 70 yards for a touchdown.

At worst the Titans had looked at being down 3-0 at the half, but instead found themselves trailing 10-0.

West Forsyth controlled the ball for most of the second half, but couldn't reach the end zone on offense. The defense also rose up, denying Crest a first down for the entire third quarter and most of the fourth quarter.

The Titans finally got the break they needed and punched in a touchdown by Williford to close the gap to 10-7 with 4:37 to play. But that's when Crest showed what its mettle. Crest took the ball and drove 68 yards to put the game away.

"They went straight at us and their strength showed," Stone said. "We had held them without a first down, but when the game was on the line they made the plays that they needed."

Stone said his team played hard and deserved a chance to win. But Crest, powered by three All-American players, took advantage of its experience down the stretch.

"They had size, plus they had been state champions two out of three seasons," Stone said.

"They had three All-Americans, but I thought they had three players that performed better than them."

The most disappointing thing about the loss was the fact that his seniors didn't get a chance to advance beyond the opening round of the playoffs.

"I thought this team deserved better," Stone said. "We had a

disappointing record. I thought it should have been better and when that happens the coach has to taken responsibility for it.

"We had great senior leadership," Stone added. "Jamal Scott was our leader and he had a great four-year career. I owe him a lot. The one thing I can say about this group was its work ethic was tremendous."

On the positive side, Stone said the Titans had nine players to be named to the All-Central Piedmont 4-A Conference Team. Some of the players top performers included Scott, defensive back Carl Ford, linebackers Phil Reganthal and Jeff Smith, running backs Williford and Greg Pettigrew, offensive lineman Kyle Peters, defensive back West also has several players being recruited for college scholarships. And the work ethic from last year seems to be carrying over.

"Our offensive line was tremendous," Stone said. "They started working out about this time last year. They were in the weight room everyday and started going out on the field working against the bags in the spring."

Although disappointed with the outcome of the '97 season, Stone said the outlook for next year looks bright.

"We have four starters returning on the offensive line and everyone knows how talented Shaun Williford is," Stone said.

"We'll also have Oscar Ledbetter, who had over 1,000 total yards. At linebacker we'll have Jeff Smith coming back and Tripp (Stone) is back. The bad news is we're losing a great bunch of seniors, but the good



MEN IN STRIPES!

Wayne Patterson, former player for the Tiny Indians in Pop Warner and West Forsyth High School, takes a breather during the Pop Warner Playoff at Kernersville last Saturday.

Virginia State, Va. Union get wins to close out CIAA regular season

Virginia State and Virginia Union played non-conference games last weekend to wrap up the 1997 CIAA football regular season.

Virginia State traveled to Jackson, Tenn. and took a 30-0 victory over Lane College. The victory allowed the Trojans to finish their season with an 8-2 overall record. VSU was 5-2 in the CIAA. Virginia State ran up 410 yards of total offense led by Freshman quarterback Antonio

Hawkins. Hawkins completed 15 passes for 221 yards, with his longest completion being a 54-yard touchdown to Jovelle Tillman. Tillman and Jerwade Lloyd led the receiving corps with seven catches for 65 yards and four catches for 50 yards and one touchdown each, respectively.

Richard Robinson was the defensive leader with 10 total tackles on nine solos and one assist. He also had two tackles

for losses and three sacks for a loss of 20 yards.

Virginia Union closed out one of its most successful seasons in recent years. The Panthers took a 44-12 victory over Benedict College. The Panthers finished their season 7-4 overall and 5-2 in the CIAA.

Andre Braxton led the way for Union with 23 rushes for 220 yards. The Panthers had a total of 272 yards rushing in the game. Edgar Greer and Delrico

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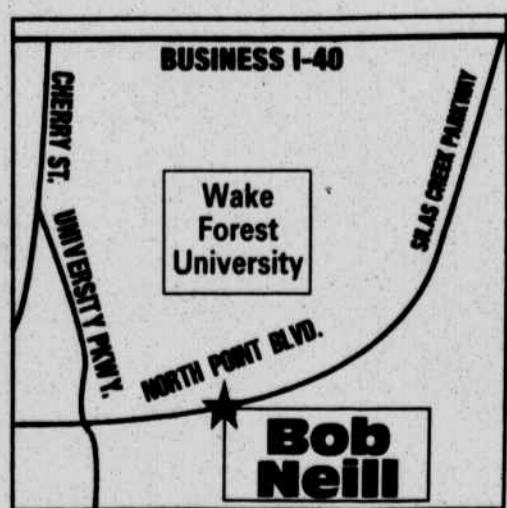
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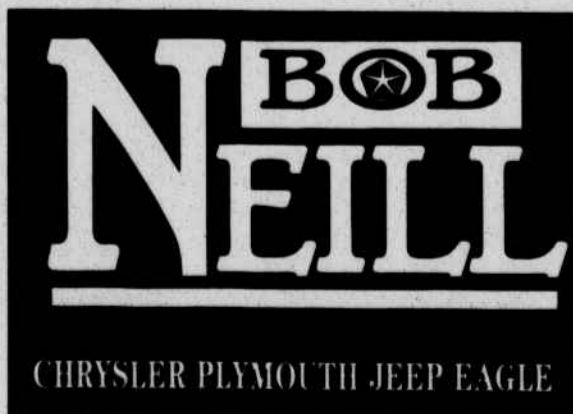
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