

Press Box

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downs in the second half as it improved to 4-2 overall and 4-0 in the CIAA.

Coach Kermit Blount said he was pleased with the win, which gave him four consecutive wins for the first time since he came to WSSU as the head coach seven seasons ago.

"It didn't matter if it was one point, I'm just happy to take the win," Blount said. "This is something we haven't done since I've been here and I have to feel good about where we are. We started the season slow, but we've picked up a lot of momentum now and I hope we can continue to put together the same kind of effort the rest of the season."

The Rams took a 7-0 lead at

the 11:25 mark of the first quarter. NCCU took only 1:23 to tie the score at 7-7 and break a 13-quarter streak in which the Rams' defense had held CIAA opponents scoreless.

Junior Bulla, the CIAA's leading rusher, gained 5 yards on his first carry against the Rams' defense. He then took the handoff on second down, broke through a hole on the left side of the Eagles' line and ran 67 yards to the Rams' 3-yard-line. NCCU quarterback Darrell Nesbitt scored two plays later on a 1-yard keeper, and Roger Burbage knocked through the extra point at the 10:02 mark.

WSSU's defense settled down after the first possession, limiting Bulla and the Eagles' ground game to only 37 yards in the remainder of the game. The Rams' interior defense consistently beat the Eagles at the line of scrimmage, giving WSSU's offense ample

opportunity to take control of the game.

The Rams had a chance to go back on top when Robert Mackey intercepted a Nesbitt pass and WSSU took control of the ball on the Eagles' 18. But Woodbury rolled left on third-and-2 and fumbled when he was falling to the turf. The ball rolled through the end zone for a touchback and NCCU took over on its 20.

WSSU's defense came to its rescue again, stopping NCCU on three plays and forcing a punt on fourth-and-7. The Rams took control on their own 44 and used nine plays to march in for the go-ahead touchdown at the 5:22 mark. The key play in the drive was a 26-yard run by tailback Terrie Newkirk on second-and-25. WSSU got the score on Dontrieze Chapman's 1-yard plunge and Shawn Thomas kicked the extra point.

From there, the WSSU defense took control. It yielded only two more first downs to the Eagles in the remainder of the game.

"Our defense continues to be our strength," Blount said. "They've risen to the occasion each game. They even played well against Catawba and (North Carolina) A&T."

The Rams must sustain that effort if they expect to win the CIAA championship. A victory over the Trojans will go a long way in helping Blount to capture his first title as a head coach.

For once the Rams won't have to worry about stopping the run. VSU's strength is in its passing game, which is tops in the CIAA.

"We'll have our hands full with them," Blount said.



Photo by Bruce Chapman
Tory Woodbury's running gave WSSU a boost in their win over NCCU.

Puryear

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"I think coach Abrams helped contribute to the attitude I have now," Puryear said. "He came in and changed a lot of things. He enforced a lot of strict rules. ... Some people didn't want to accept it, but he's been fair to everyone."

Abrams also let the returning Eagle players know that every position on the team was up for grabs. That suited Puryear just fine because it opened an opportunity for him to earn playing time.

Puryear wasn't in the starting lineup when the Eagles started the season. However, after several bone-jarring tackles on special teams he impressed the coaches well enough to see action in the Eagles' second game of the season. Once he got into the lineup he showed even more and has thus started the past

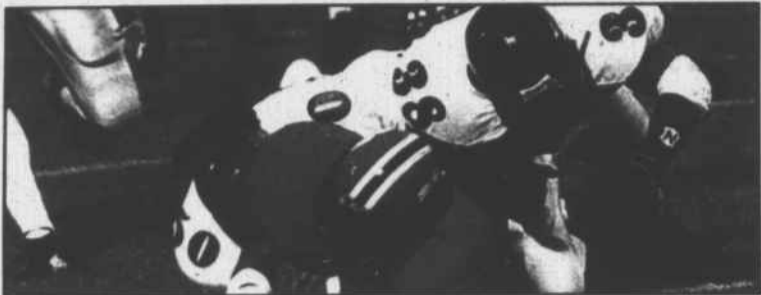


Photo by Bruce Chapman
Puryear helps collar a WSSU runner.

five NCCU games.

"All I was looking for was an opportunity," Puryear said. "Coach told me he was impressed by what I did the first time I got into the lineup and I've been able to hold my job ever since."

Nevertheless it took some getting used to by Puryear.

He also said he has a greater inner strength. Part of it comes from his faith in God. He writes Philippians 4:13 on his elbow pads

before every game. That's part of his motto these days - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

"In high school I was a free safety," he said. "I wasn't really used to coming up doing a lot of hitting. But I've gotten a lot bigger now - I'm a solid 200 pounds - and I feel like I have the strength to take on the tight end and offensive linemen."

Brown

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Brown said it has been a blessing in disguise.

"I think this has really been good for me," he said, during an interview on the FUMA campus last week. "If I had gone off to a big-time college program after high school I wouldn't have been ready for it."

"I didn't have the discipline to sit down and study like I need to," he added. "It would have been hard for me to make the adjustment to having a strict work load."

Fork Union is providing that. "I'm learning how to be more focused on my academics," Brown said. "The way the classes are structured, they help you to really master a subject before moving on to something else."

The class structure at FUMA is indeed different from that found at most academic institutions. Students take only one course at a time for a period of seven weeks. That gives them an opportunity to focus on the key concepts that the subject incorporates.

The class that Brown has been enrolled in for the first session is Algebra II.

"I've learned a lot and I really think it is going to help me when I take the SAT again," he said. "I feel that I'll be ready this time."

Brown said he's also benefited from the emphasis the school places on study time. Each student is required to spend 2 1/2 hours studying each night. For Brown

that means locking in on his studies from 7:10-9:40 p.m. That gives him about 20 minutes to relax before bed. The cadets' day begins at 6 a.m. and all lights in the dorm are required to go out at 10 p.m.

So far, Brown hasn't had any problems with it. He hasn't gotten any demerits for not following academy rules.

"Usually I'm tired from a long day," he said. "It's really no big problem because your day is so structured. There's something to do from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed."

The one time that Brown and his fellow cadets get to shed their uniforms is in the afternoon. Most of them participate in some form of interscholastic sports. Brown is a member of the academy's post-graduate football team, which consists of players who have completed their eligibility on the high school level.

Many of the nation's top players come to Fork Union to better themselves academically before moving on to big-time college athletics. Some of the former players in the program include Eddie George, who starred at Ohio State before going on to the NFL, and Jerry Stackhouse, who was a basketball standout at the University of North Carolina before embarking on an NBA career.

Brown would like to follow in their footsteps.

"There are a lot of guys who have come here and got themselves together before going on to college," he said. "By coming here, I realize that I have to work on some

of the things that I didn't do in high school. It's made me want to be successful a whole lot more."

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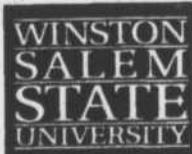
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