Sports Beat

with Bill Johnson



TELLING IT LIKE IT IS---

North Carolina A&T State University ushered in the new football season in Greensboro Saturday night with all the grandeur and the genuine enthusiasm one associates with a big winner.

And the noisey gathering of more than 8,000 enthusiasts in Memorial Stadium gave rise to the expectations that they will settle for nothing less than the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference championship.

The pressure is placed squarely on the broad shoulders of coach Hornsby Howell, one of the most friendly and most polished gentlemen in the profession.

The greying Howell has all of the tools with which to mould a conference champion. His squad is big, deep and talented, and there appears to be a surplus of exceptional football players at each position.

However, Saturday night in sweltering Memorial Stadium, A&T's proud football team did not wear the appearance of a winner very well. The potentials are there but Hornsby's Aggies did not perform with the consistency that is needed to knock over such big people as Morgan State, Grambling, Norfolk State and Florida A&M.

"We did not look too good," agreed Howell following the hard-earned 21-13 triumph the Gold team posted over the Blues. "The real purpose of this game is to give us some idea of our short-comings before the season gets underway."

Aggie shortcoming were obvious Saturday night. The blocking left lots to be desired and Leonard Reliford, the lanky quarterback who is expected to lead the Aggies to the top of the MEAC heap, looked horrible.

"He'll come around," Howell predicted with a shroud of the shoulder, pointing out that "this was not one of his better performances."

The veteran Aggie mentor had praise for Paul McKibbins, the stubby junior who is also seeking the vital quarterback post. And, if his artistries Saturday night could be used as a measuring rod, it is a safe bet to figure McKibbins as the A&T starter at quarterback against Elizabeth City this Saturday afternoon.

McKibbins did what Reliford could not do. He led the Blues to a touchdown in the first half and it was he who brought the Gold team from behind with a brilliant performance in the closing half. Reliford had only moderate success with the Gold team in the first half and he had no success with the Blue team in the second period.

The popular Aggie coach stated that he lost eight men off last year's starting teams, "it's going to take some time to find adequate replacement," he explained.

Howell heaped praise on a lot of people, a trio of Charlotteans were included among them. Wide receiver Orsure Stokes won his accolades as he was superb with four catches for 93 yards and a touchdown. Then there were running backs George Ragsdale, Eric Wallace, William Medley, James McLinnaham, Al Holland, Richard Holton, and Thomas Murphy who are making it very difficult for Howell to choose a starting pair. An early guess is that Ragsdale and Holland will get

the nod Saturday.

One can not find enough adjectives to adequately describe Holland, the versatile senior who is better - than - average at quarterback, running back, wide receiver and defensive back. This young man could be the key to whatever success Howell has this fall.

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In MEAC Race

A&T Aggies Expected To Chase Morgan

Morgan State's Bears have been picked as the team to beat in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference football race this season but according to the coaches in the seventeam league, any team is capable of ending up on top.

Earl Bank's eleven got the top rating in the conference but North Carolina A&T, defending champion North Carolina Central along with South Carolina State, and Howard are expected to be at the top of the ladder.

And don't count Delaware
State and Maryland - Eastern
Shore out of the race when you
look at the returning rosters
for both of these teams and the
fact they knocked off the
league leaders last year.

The main reason Morgan was picked to finish first in the conference is because of the fact the Baltimore squad returns 41 lettermen. Even with the wealth of talent returning, Banks is the first to admit Morgan has several question marks about the upcoming season.

The biggest problem in the Bear camp is finding a number one quarter-back. Banks and his coaching staff will have four candidates to choose from for the number one signal calling post. Edmond Burt, a 5-11, 175-pound jr., is coming back from early season injuries and last year's frosh duo - Greg Grimes (6-2, 205) and Bernard Jenkins (6-0, 185) a year older and 10 games wiser in the ways of quarterbacking Bank's teams, the prospect of more steady leadership is expected this Add the name John Smalls (5-11, 175) who returns from the Military service, to the list of candidates for the signal calling post.

Morgan's one-two devasting ground gaining punch returns in the presence of All-MEAC Bobby Hammond and Jimmy Joe. Hammond, a 5-10, 185-pound junior was the second leading ground gainer in the conference last year with 784 yards in 160 carries for an average of 4.9 per carry. Joe, his running mate, finished seventh in the league with 478 yards.

With Hammond and Joe providing the brunt of the ground attack, the Bear's running game is solid with Mike Collier (5-11, 200), who was one of the nation's leading kick and punt returners last year, Craig Gee, Ken Goodrich, Less Brooks, Ron James and Gerald Harris in

Greg Latta, 6-4, 230, Sr., has the tight end position all to himself. The outside receiving position is up for grabs with soph Dale Robinson (6-2, 190) and Jimmy Wooten (6-1, 185) staging a battle. Versatile senior Curt Davis (5-11, 180) will handle the flanker position if he can stay healthy.

The offensive interior line is another problem for Banks and the Bears if they expect to



CHARLOTTE'S AGGIES COMPRISE LARGEST CITY DELEGATION

There are more football players at N.C. A&T State University from Charlotte than any other city including Greensboro. The large delegation includes (left to right) front row players Joe Kendrick, John Hairston, William

league record and 5-5 over-all mark. Tackle Bill Thompson (6-2, 245, Sr.), whose knee is still questionable, and center Wayne Frazier (6-2, 235, Jr.) are the only players with both size and experience on the offensive front.

A&T returns 28 lettermen this season along with a bumper crop of freshmen. The Aggies have talent at every position but Coach Hornsby Howell, beginning his sixth season as head of the Aggie forces, will need to

develop depth at all positions.

Two juniors and time-tested quarterbacks are around to lead the offense for the Aggies. Leonard Reliford (6-5, 205) is a deadly passer and Paul McKibbins (6-2, 195) is a running threat any time he has the ball.

Reliford completed 45 of 120 passes for 665 yards and seven touchdowns last season. McKibbins rushed for 201 yards in 56 carries last year.

yards in 56 carries last year.
Ray Pettiford and Curtis
Gooding will be the main
targets for the Aggie quarterbacks. Gooding caught
only six passes last year but
gained 265 yards on these half
dozen and scored two touchdowns.

Running backs Al Holland, George Ragsdale and Thomas Murphy, all juniors, return to handle the ground game for the Aggies who were 8-2 last year. Ragsdale (5-11, 190) was the rushing leader for the Gate City charges with 572 yards in 150 carries for a 3.8 average. Holland (5-11, 200) picked up 371 yards in 98 cracks at the line while Murphy (5-11, 200)

improve on last year's 4-2 rushed for 346 yards in 81 league record and 5-5 over-all mark. Tackle Bill Thompson the number one replacement champions

in the backfield for A&T.

Opening up the holes up front for the Aggies will be Danny Coleman (6-2, 225, Junior), John Hairston (6-0, 220), William Creecy (5-10, 205) and Melvin Rose (6-0, 250).

The defensive line is spearheaded by ends Reggie Strickland (6-2, 255), Carl Collins (6-4, 240) and tackle Donald Barnes (6-1, 205). The secondary returnees include Steve Jackson (6-2, 220), and John Hampton (6-2, 185).

North Carolina Central was picked to finish third in the conference by the coaches but new coach Willie Smith disagrees with the prediction because of the heavy losses from the championship team of a year ago.

The Eagles return 11 lettermen from the 1972

yards in 81 championship team which compiled a 9-2 overall record.

Medley, William Blue, (second row) Mike

Stanley, Howard Barnhill, Dexter Feaster,

Assistant Coach Wylie Harris, Joe Crosby,

Tillman Sease, head Coach of the Howard eleven, picks no bones about the upcoming season. "If we can find a quarterback, I think we will be right in the thick of the race for the conference title," he stated.

One of the reasons Sease is confident about his Bisons is because most of the starting defensive unit for Howard returns. Howard, which ranked number two in defense last season in the small college statistics, gave up only 85 points in 10 games including four shutouts.

Returning starters on the defensive unit include Gregory Butler, Norvell Fuller, Willie Harrell and Bruce Williams. Howard must develop some defensive linemen as back-up strength.

Two sophomores with no playing experience will lead Crystal Ball

Morgan

N. C. A&T

N. C. Central

Howard

Maryland - ES

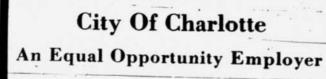
S. C. State

Delaware State



VERSATILE AL HOLLAND ...A&T's Superstar

the list of quarterback candidates. Leon Jenkins and had any game experience. Darryl Bridges were on the



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