



Leon Johnson loves Homecoming. In the '93 game vs. Wake Forest, he ran for 119 yards. In last year's game vs. Georgia Tech, he had 110 yards and 2 TDs.

Weak-Scoring Deacons to Serve As Homecoming Fodder for UNC

BY AARON BEARD
STAFF WRITER

When North Carolina hosts Wake Forest on Saturday in Kenan Stadium, the question on the minds of many Tar Heel fans won't be: "Will we win today?"

The question will be: "Just how many will we win by?"

In truth, who can blame the Carolina blue faithful? After stumbling to an 0-2 start, the Tar Heels turned their season around by winning three straight games. The biggest came on Oct. 7, as UNC finally topped the Virginia Cavaliers, ranked ninth in the nation at the time, 22-17.

Adding to North Carolina's confidence is the fact that its opponent for 1995 Homecoming, for all intents and purposes, doesn't know how to put points on the board.

Or win a big football game.

So Saturday's 1:30 p.m. kickoff is viewed less as a contest and more as a tuneup for the Tar Heels, who take on unpredictable Clemson and top-ranked Florida State over the next three weeks.

For Wake Forest, the 1995 season has been no different from the previous two under Coach Jim Caldwell. The Deacons opened the season with a 24-22 loss at home against Appalachian State and followed that with a 35-9 setback at the hands of a Tulane team that finished 1-10 in 1994.

It took two more weeks before Wake finally got into the win column, with a 30-7 victory over Navy.

But Caldwell said the Deacons are still optimistic.

"Our morale is excellent," he said. "Our players have maintained the type of enthusiasm that is necessary to have a successful program. They are hungry to win more football games, and they are not pleased with our records over the past two years."

The Deacs have had problems all season with scoring points, whether in a close game or a lopsided loss. The offense has been anemic, averaging only 16 points per game. In the Oct. 7 loss to Maryland, the team couldn't pull out the victory despite holding the quick-strike Terrapins to just nine points.

Quarterback Rusty LaRue has been one of the only bright spots for Wake Forest this fall. The 6-foot-2 senior has passed for five TDs and 172 yards per game, with a season high 277 yards at Virginia. But he's taken a pounding behind an offensive line that has allowed 18 sacks in the first six games.

Wide receiver Marlon Estes, a Garner native, has been LaRue's favorite target, catching 31 balls for 381 yards and four touchdowns.

To take some of the pressure off LaRue's shoulders, the Deacons will have to find some form of a running game. Junior John Lewis has been the leading rusher over the first six games, but he has amassed only 43 yards per contest. Thus far, Wake Forest has been outgained on the ground an average of 85 yards per contest.

Linebacker Tucker Grace has continued his strong play throughout the season. As of Oct. 7, Grace led the ACC with 62 tackles. Against Clemson, he had 15 tackles and one quarterback sack.

But the rest of the defensive unit isn't following Grace's lead. Wake Forest continues to give up over 23 points per game and close to 359 yards per contest.

In Chapel Hill, however, expectations are at a season high. The Tar Heels have finally solved their turnover problems. In the first three games, UNC coughed up the ball 14 times. But in games against Ohio and Virginia, the Tar Heels have given up the ball only three times.

Everyone expected the offense to steal the show, but it has been the defense that has raised eyebrows across the ACC and the country. Currently, the defense is ranked second in the nation, giving up only 206 yards of total offense per game.

"We've still got a lot of work to do, but our defense is playing very well right now," Coach Mack Brown said. "There were some skeptics about us because some people didn't seem to think we had played a de-

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