

Tigers Tackle Loss of Key Players

Clemson coach Tommy West must replace some major components from his 1997 Peach Bowl squad.

By MIKE ISKANDAR
Staff Writer

A year ago, a talented Clemson football team had visions of making a run at an ACC championship and finishing in the top 10 in the nation.

But even with the talent and experience the '97 Tigers boasted, they finished a disappointing 4-4 in the ACC and 7-5 overall.

With the loss of 12 starters this year, Clemson must rebuild to keep itself out of the bottom third in the conference.

Tiger coach Tommy West faces the daunting task of replacing the school's all-time leading pass-



Junior linebacker **Rahim Abdullah** has three career TDs and was fifth on the team in tackles in 1997 with 70.

er Nealon Greene, all-time leading rusher Raymond Priester, All-American linebacker Anthony Simmons and record-setting receiver Tony Horne.

"We have certainly lost some of Clemson's top players of the last decade," West said.

The Tigers will have to make do with talented but much less experienced players that will have to step up in order for Clemson to be a force this season.

"We will have to count on some new players, especially offensively, who have not had to carry the load," West said. "I don't think there will be a drop-off in talent, but there will be a drop-off in experience."

At quarterback, Clemson will turn to junior Brandon Streeter to replace Greene, a four-year starter who passed for more than 2,000 yards last season.

As the only quarterback on the team with any playing experience, Streeter's recovery from a separated shoulder last season and a fractured ankle last spring is crucial to the team's success.

At running back, redshirt freshman Travis Zachery will likely replace Priester, who was the ACC's third-leading rusher last season with 894 yards.

Much of the success of the running game will depend on how well the offensive line recovers from the loss of All-

Clemson '98 Schedule

Sept. 5	Furman
Sept. 12	Virginia Tech
Sept. 19	at Virginia
Sept. 26	Wake Forest
Oct. 3	at UNC
Oct. 10	Maryland
Oct. 17	at Florida State
Oct. 24	at Duke
Oct. 31	N.C. State
Nov. 12	Georgia Tech
Nov. 21	S. Carolina

American tackle Jim Bundren and All-ACC guard Glenn Rountree.

Despite the loss of Horne, who set a single-season record last season with 70 receptions, the receiving corps will be strong, featuring juniors Brian Wofford and Mal Lawyer who combined for 56 receptions and 772 yards.

The Tigers' nationally-ranked punter



Clemson

1997 record: 7-5 (4-4 in ACC)
Head Coach: Tommy West (32-27 overall, 28-20 at Clemson)

Home Field: Memorial Stadium (81,474)

Returning Starters: 5 offense, 6 defense

Key Returnees: LB Rahim Abdullah, S DeMarco Fox, C Jason Gamble, QB Brandon Streeter

Key Losses: QB Nealon Greene, WR Tony Horne, RB Raymond Priester, LB Anthony Simmons

Strengths: Running the football has been a traditional strength, and Travis Zachery looks to fill the hole left by Priester. Abdullah had 2 blocked punts and a sack in the Peach Bowl against Auburn.

Weaknesses: The Tigers must replace key performers at skill positions. Simmons was an All-American linebacker, and Clemson won't be as good at his spot this season.

Keys to season: Defense must be successful early, giving the offense time to adjust. Clemson must keep Streeter healthy and find a go-to receiver.

Key Game: Nov. 21 vs. South Carolina



Tommy West

notched Auburn returns to try to fill the gap.

The defensive backfield should be a strength as well, with corners Antwan Edwards and DoMarco Fox leading the way.

Kevin Laird and kicker David Richardson make Clemson's special teams one of the conference's best.

Defensively, the biggest challenge will be filling the gap left by Simmons. Simmons was a finalist for the Butkus Award and was the ACC's leading tackler with 144 hits.

"You can't replace Anthony Simmons," West said of the linebacker,

who was an NFL first-round pick

But linebackers Rahim Abdullah, a 6-foot-6 230-pound junior, who notched 73 tackles last season and was the team's MVP in their Peach Bowl loss to Auburn returns to try to fill the gap.

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RECEIVERS

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receivers' success is the pressure put on them everyday in practice by the cornerbacks, including two-time consensus All-America cornerback Dre' Bly.

"I think going against Dre' makes each and every one of us a better receiver," Peace said. "And I think in turn we make him a better corner."

UNC needs its three main receivers to produce from the start in order to take the heat off the young and developing running game.

TIGHT ENDS

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should also see ample playing time.

The Tar Heels will need multiple players to fill the vacancy left when Crumpler went down with a torn anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments and cartilage damage in his left knee on March 26. Crumpler caught 24 passes for 278 yards as sophomore in 1997 and was named All-ACC.

"We lost a great one when we lost Alge Crumpler," head coach Carl

"It seems like it would be a little pressure, but we've done it before so we really don't feel any," Brown said. "We just have to do the things we've been doing and hopefully the running game will come along."

Although the receivers have the potential to be the best in the nation, Moody said the group needs to improve certain technical aspects of their game.

"I'd like them to get more productive after they catch the football," Moody said.

"If they go through the natural maturing process, they should have another productive year."

Torbush said. "He's a great player, one of the best athletes we had on the team, so we hate to lose him."

But Torbush is not disappointed at all when it comes to tight end coach Terry Lewis' new starting selection. Torbush recruited Mogridge out of high school and knows he has the ability to adjust to new situations.

"I'm glad to see him get the role, to tell you the truth," Torbush said. "He's just a great young man who works hard every day. He'll give you everything he's got and it will be hard to take his (starting) job."



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