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Without Ore, Hokies shoot for tops of ACC

ACC-best defense lost seven starters

BY LOUIE HORVATH
SENIOR WRITER

Now that the QB competition is settled for good, the Virginia Tech Hokies can set their sights on winning the ACC Coastal Division for the second consecutive year.

ACC Championship MVP Sean Glennon outperformed Tyrod Taylor in fall practices and scrimmages to take sole possession of the reigns to the Virginia Tech offense.

Taylor also represents the team's leading returning rusher, but at the season's opening, he finds himself backing up the redshirt senior Glennon.

"It's a little different situation because Tyrod played a little bit more his freshman year than I did, so there might be that expectation to play," Glennon said.

"But if I outplay him noticeably and they say Sean's our guy, and Tyrod, you're going to back him up and go in if he's injured, he might

(redshirt). I mean, it worked for me."

The running back situation is unsettled, with five players competing for a starting position in the backfield — all of whom lack in-game experience. Last year's starter, Branden Ore, was dismissed from the team during the summer.

But as murky as the running back situation seems, it looks stable when compared to that of the wide receivers. Virginia Tech graduated its four top receivers in 2007.

First-year WR Jarrett Boykin and TE Greg Boone have been the most impressive in camp, but there is no clear-cut safety blanket for Glennon.

The team still has numerous holes to fill — after all, it graduated 13 players. Among those 13 are seven starters from a vaunted defense that ranked first in the ACC in scoring and total yards.

The secondary figures to be the strength of that unit, which ranked fourth in passing yards allowed per game in the ACC, returning FS Kam Chancellor and CB Victor Harris.

The defensive line is hoping Jason Worlds and Orion Martin will anchor the line from the ends. Behind them, linebackers Brett Warren and Purnell Sturdivant are sliding into starting spots.

The special teams unit, a perennial Frank Beamer specialty, figures to be a strength again this year, with fifth-year senior kicker Dustin Keys and punter Brent Bowden holding kicking duties.

Writers still have given the Hokies the benefit of the doubt despite the turnover in players — the preseason media poll placed Virginia Tech at the head of the Coastal Division by a substantial margin.

But that could be attributed to the fact that they have finished in the top three spots in the ACC every year since they joined the conference in 2004.

UM Hurricanes look to freshmen for new start

Six players suspended for first game

BY ANNA KIM
STAFF WRITER

Instead of the deafening roar of a victorious bowl game to close out the season, all the Miami Hurricanes heard were critics.

"Even guys that don't play football tease me about it," junior Jason Fox said.

That's what happens when a perennial national title contender plunges into mediocrity with a 5-7 record (2-6 ACC) — its first losing record since 1997.

And the disappointment of the 2007 season was perhaps best encapsulated in the 48-0 shut-out at the hands of Virginia in the team's last game in the Miami Orange Bowl.

Now UM would like nothing more than to silence the detractors. "The U," in head coach Randy Shannon's second season, boasts a

premier recruiting class.

And after finishing 2007 ranked 110th in total offense and 101st in scoring offense, the team could use it.

The Hurricanes added key recruits at nearly every position.

But questions abound about freshmen quarterbacks Robert Marve and backup Jacory Harris.

"I just tell them to go out there and compete," Fox said. "But right now just learn all you can."

Marve, named Florida's Mr. Football in 2006, has seized the opportunity to do just that.

"He's a very strong competitor. He goes out to make a play every time," Fox said.

"He's a really athletic quarterback. He's always fired up in the huddle. He wants to go out and make a play. That's what you need in a quarterback."

Unfortunately, that leadership will be put on hold — Marve was suspended for the season opener against Charleston Southern on Aug. 28, as were six other players for unspecified rules violations.

And in light of last season's off-field distractions, Fox said it will take more than a few new faces to lift the team out of mediocrity.

"I've been over that probably a million times in my head," he said. "Some of the players that we had to get rid of were kind of cancerous players to the team."

But those are issues of the past — and a new outlook strives to keep them there.

"They're gone now, which is good for us," he said. "We hope to get back to focusing on football."

So though the disappointment of last season lingers, the team has decided it is done hearing about it.

"We try not to bring up last year too often," Fox said. "We need to move past that."