

# New-look lines key to Wahoos' success in '08

## Veterans play stronghold on d-line

BY SCOTT POWERS  
SENIOR WRITER

There weren't too many things that the 2007 University of Virginia Cavaliers did particularly well.

Virginia finished ninth in the ACC in offensive yards per game and fifth in yards allowed per game.

But the Wahoos kept their opponents out of the end zone as well as any team in the conference.

No ACC team allowed fewer touchdowns than Virginia's 27. And when opponents came close, the defense clamped down. Facing 41 red-zone threats, they allowed only 18 touchdowns.

This propelled the Cavaliers to a 9-2 record and a No. 16 AP ranking through 11 weeks.

But a season-finale loss to Virginia Tech and a Gator Bowl defeat at the hands of Texas Tech dropped Virginia out of the AP Top 25 — receiving the 26th most

votes.

And coach Al Groh did claim the honor of ACC Coach of the Year.

These Cavs will have a hard time replicating that success, though.

The problems begin with the loss of two-year starting quarterback Jameel Sewell, who left the squad for academic reasons.

At press time, Groh had yet to name the left-handed Sewell's replacement. Scott Deke, Peter Lalich and Marc Verica have been vying for the job since the beginning of training camp.

No matter the decision, receivers will have to adjust to catching balls from a right-handed quarterback.

But tight end John Phillips said he isn't concerned.

"It's still the ball. It's still throw and catch, so it's not a big difference," he said.

Last year's two-headed rushing

attack of Cedric Peerman and Mikell Simpson will return, which is good news for a youthful offense.

But paving the way for the tailbacks could be an issue. Virginia will replace three-fifths of the starting offensive line, including first-round NFL Draft pick Branden Albert.

The defensive side of the line also has three starters to replace, including Ted Hendricks Award-winner and second overall draft pick Chris Long.

Behind that line, though, will stand three senior linebackers — Antonio Appleby, Jon Copper and Clint Sintim. The veterans will anchor the defense.

"We're going to make sure that we do everything to make sure those guys are on top of their games," Groh told VirginiaSports.com.

The Cavaliers will open their season at home with a nationally televised game against USC. And they will finish off a difficult conference schedule with three games against teams in the preseason Top 25.

# Eagles look to fill empty roster, replace QB Ryan

## Offense depleted by draft, graduation

BY LOUIE HORVATH  
SENIOR WRITER

Matt Ryan is still starting at QB ... but the only problem for Boston College — and tight end Ryan Purvis — is that it's now for the Atlanta Falcons of the NFL. But Purvis does not seem that worried.

"Ever since I've been at BC, we've been an underdog and we've had something to prove," Purvis said.

"Obviously I can understand where the predictions are coming from ... but we've always had that mentality that BC is perceived as underrated."

While Heisman candidate Ryan's graduation to the NFL certainly will be the most obvious piece missing from a team that went 11-3 with a win against Michigan State in the Champs Sports Bowl, the team also is no longer with its leading tackler,

interceptor and punt returner in Jamie Silva or its leader in rushing yards and receptions, Andre Callender.

After such a mass exodus, the only choice for head coach Jeff Jagodzinski is to pick up the pieces and try to outperform paltry expectations.

The Eagles were picked at media day to finish fourth in the ACC Atlantic Division, just one year after winning the division and losing to Virginia Tech in the ACC Championship.

The Eagles are going to move forward with senior Chris Crane attempting to fill Ryan's cleats, and true freshman Josh Haden at running back.

"A lot of times I'd hold a block and he'd be gone," Purvis said of Haden.

"He picked it up unusually fast for a high school kid."

The offensive line was spared

from filling excessive holes — they return three starters from last year, led by left guard Clif Ramsey.

On the other side of the ball, while the Eagles are grappling with the loss of Silva, they expect a strong front seven, bolstered by defensive end B.J. Raji and linebacker Brian Toal, both returning after sitting out last season.

The scariest part? They might not need the help, seeing as the front seven returns most of the starters from the top rush defense in the ACC last season.

The secondary is counting on Wes Davis and Roderick Rollins to help shore up its pass defense, which ranked dead last in the ACC last year.

The Eagles are hoping for strong defense in the early season, at least until their offense can gel into a cohesive unit.

And their schedule is favorable for such a reaction because they face a weak nonconference schedule until reaching the ACC slate.

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