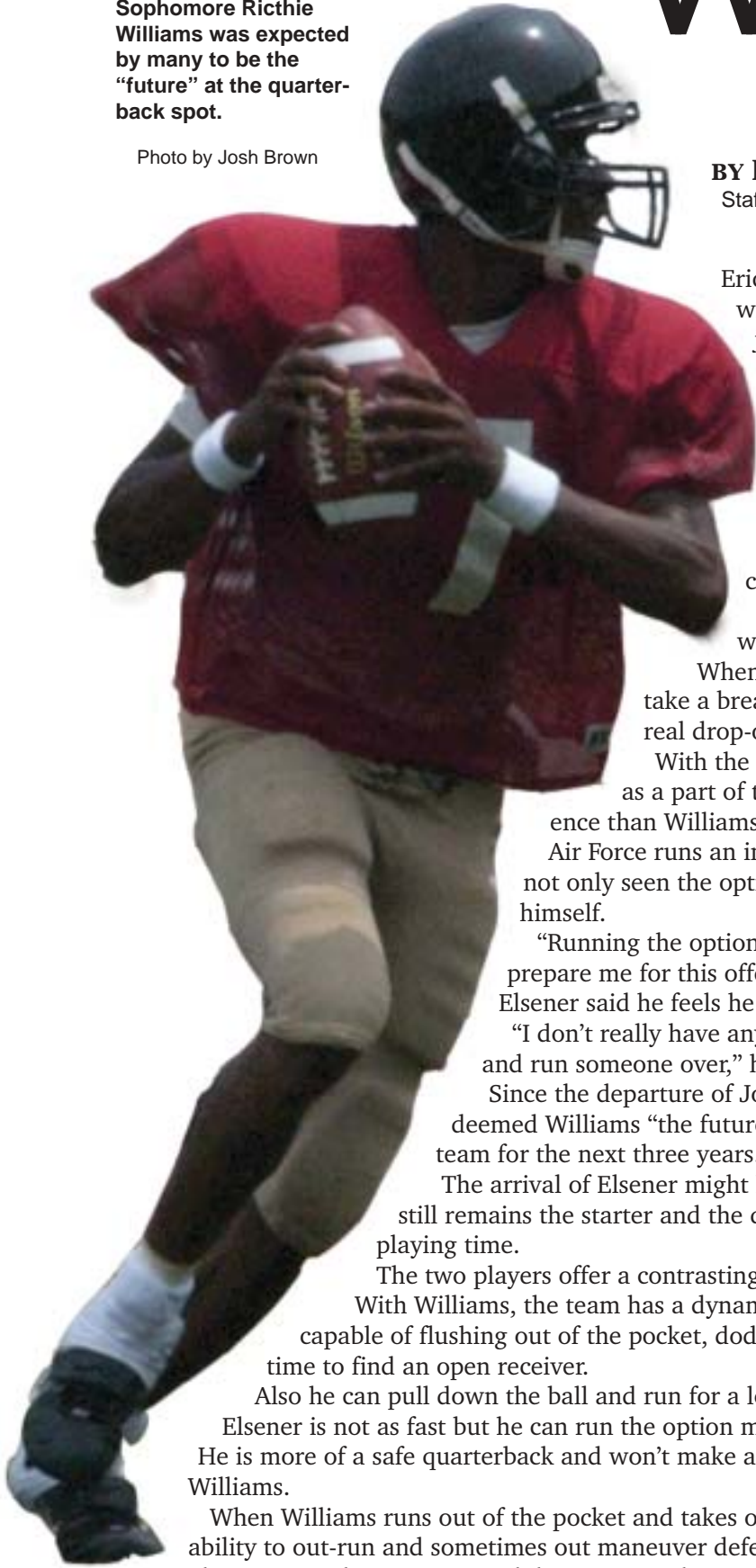


WILLIAMS VS. ELSNER

Sophomore Richie Williams was expected by many to be the "future" at the quarterback spot.

Photo by Josh Brown



BY BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

Richie Williams is in the fight of his life, and it is not from an opposing defense. Eric Elsner, a junior transfer from Air Force Academy and the current second string quarterback, will likely see playing time in every game this season and is pushing Williams for his starting job.

"I am ready and prepared to play," Elsner said. "I've had some time to work with the offense, the reps in practice have been distributed between both me and Richie and I just have to go and get after it."

"Not knowing who the starter might be, it's definitely keeping me on my toes," Williams said. "He's a good quarterback and him giving me more competition and more competition just makes me a better player."

Head coach Jerry Moore said he is intent on not having a quarterback controversy.

Williams has done nothing to lose his job and until he does, he will remain the starting quarterback, he said.

When Elsner comes in to play it will allow Williams to take a breather on the sideline without the team having a real drop-off at quarterback.

With the Mountaineers planning to run a base option as a part of their offense, Elsner offers more experience than Williams.

Air Force runs an intricate option offense and Elsner has not only seen the option run every day in practice, he ran it himself.

"Running the option at Air Force has definitely helped prepare me for this offense," he said.

Elsner said he feels he is a well-rounded player.

"I don't really have any moves yet, but I'm also not afraid to go out and run someone over," he said.

Since the departure of Joe Burchette, students and alumni alike both deemed Williams "the future," as he was expected to lead this football team for the next three years.

The arrival of Elsner might have altered this belief, but for now, Williams still remains the starter and the quarterback likely to receive the most playing time.

The two players offer a contrasting style of play.

With Williams, the team has a dynamic weapon in the backfield. Williams is capable of flushing out of the pocket, dodging tackles, and giving himself extra time to find an open receiver.

Also he can pull down the ball and run for a long gain at any given time.

Elsner is not as fast but he can run the option more precisely.

He is more of a safe quarterback and won't make as many big, or mistakes, plays as Williams.

When Williams runs out of the pocket and takes off downfield, he has the ability to out-run and sometimes out maneuver defenders.

Elsner won't lose anyone with his moves or his respectable speed, but he will run over smaller defensive backs.

In the first game of the season at Hawaii, Williams completed 11 of 20 passes for 132 yards and two touchdown passes.

He also carried the ball 15 times for 66 yards.

Williams looked sharp for most of the game and made plays out of nothing, scrambling for first downs.

At times, the option was a disaster, almost resulting in a few fumbles.

Elsner did not see as much playing time as originally expected, but he was safe with the ball and completed 2 of 3 passes for 5 yards.

Regardless of who plays, both players know that the most important aspect is the team.

"I'm here to support the team," Elsner said. "The team comes first no matter who plays."



Eric Elsner, a junior transfer from Air Force has moved up quickly at the quarterback position for Appalachian.

Photo by James Nix

Conference commences with Eastern Kentucky Colonels

BY BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

In order to adequately prepare for Saturday's games against the Colonels of Eastern Kentucky, the Mountaineers must rest.

"We have got to recover from our trip to Hawaii," Appalachian State head coach Jerry Moore said.

Appalachian could not take Tuesday and Wednesday of this week off of practice after the 40-17 loss suffered against the University of Hawaii last weekend, and plan on competing against Saturday.

"We need as much rest as we can get, but we also need to have good practice sessions," Moore said.

The Mountaineers will also try to avoid the slow start that plagued them in last year's game against Eastern Kentucky, where they fell behind 21-7 at halftime.

"Last year was only Richie's second start and I am not sure that we knew all the things he could or could not do," Moore said. "Right now we feel a lot more comfortable with either him or (Eric) Elsner right now than we did last year."

Eastern Kentucky was ranked for most of last season but enters this year with a lot of question marks on offense.

"They've got quite a few new faces," Moore said.

Those new faces include two transfer quarterbacks and a transfer running back, Moore said.

The offensive line for the Colonels is huge and it boasts a pair of all-conference players, including starting center Larry Turner.

Turner is a preseason All-American and the anchor of the line.

Appalachian's defensive unit should maintain the Colonels offense, but they might have trouble getting early pressure on the quarterback.

The coaches will stress minimizing big plays this week at practice. The Mountaineers gave up a lot of big plays in Hawaii, and Moore said the unit could not afford to give up those same big plays.

"The big plays that Hawaii made just killed us," Moore said.

The plays that they did not make against Hawaii included Richie Williams overthrowing a wide-open DaVon Fowlkes that would have resulted in a sure touchdown.

On offense, the Mountaineers will face a depleted defensive unit that has lost its top three tacklers and top two defensive backs.

Yermiah Bell, the Colonels starting safety last year was drafted by the Miami Dolphins in the sixth round of the NFL draft.

Bell recorded 86 tackles last year and also picked off six passes. His departure leaves a huge hole in their secondary.

This could be the perfect defense for the Appalachian offense to jell against. The Mountaineers should be able to move



Josh Brown | Chief Photographer

The Mountaineers beat Eastern Kentucky University 36-28 Sept. 14, 2002.

the ball and get all of the nuances like timing pass patterns down.

One thing that the Mountaineers must do in order to win is to make the big play that eluded them against Hawaii.

"We are also going to have to make plays

on offense that we did not make against Hawaii," Moore said.

"Our turnovers were also low like last game, and we need to maintain that. We only had one turnover and that is good enough to win," Moore said.

INSIDE

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Stovall and Jackson prove size doesn't matter. •3B

SoCON PREVIEW
A look into this 6B• s eason's matchups.

Football Preview 2003

Coach Moore hopes to play to potential, looks to defense to lead the team

BY BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

veteran players on defense than we do on offense. There are a lot of unknowns about our offense right now so we will probably rely heavily on our defense and special teams early.

Are you concerned at all about your interior defensive linemen or safeties? There are a couple of red shirt players and true freshman that are going to have to step in and play right away, and they have not had a lot of playing time or experience.

Well, we are real pleased with the way we are playing inside on the line. George Carr is a true freshman and he's playing real solid, Chase Pritchett is a red shirt freshman and he's a solid player and Omarr Byrom is a red shirt freshman and he's a fine player. They don't bother me too much because they're well coached. Our defensive line coach Dale Jones does a great job with them and they are going to be ready to play. Our safeties are pretty much the same way. They've been in the program for a year now so they know what to do.

Can you talk about the injury to Nygel Rogers and its effect on the team?

Sure. This is an injury that could possibly end Nygel Roger's career so of course we're concerned. I hope that we can get some relief one way or the other. He might get back this year and there is always a possibility of appealing to NCAA and getting another year of eligibility for him. We're just going to play it day to day and see how he progresses throughout the year and where he is when conference play starts.

Going to offense, you mentioned earlier that both quarterbacks (Richie Williams and Eric Elsener) would get to play during the game. Do you plan to do that all year?

I would think that all year long both players will play. We wont get into any... I'll use the term "Quarterback Controversy," or something where we switch players every other series. We'll just play it by ear throughout the year. We have two great kids here who understand their role and the whole team un-

derstands their role so that makes it pretty easy on us.

Did you and your staff expect Elsener to make such an impact?

Well Coach DeBerry(head coach at Air Force) and some other coaches out there called us about him and he's turned out to be everything they said he was and then some. He's very much a competitor, he will be a good leader for us and he really gives us some fine strength and depth at the quarterback position

Will fans see anything from the offense that they haven't seen the past couple of years? Are there any plans to run an option offense and spread the field with four or five wide receivers?

You are going to see some of the same things you've seen before, there is just going to be more emphasis on it. As for the option game, maybe you'll see some of that. We are not fixing to get into where we're an option team and run 50 or 60 options a game, but we have

option type quarterbacks and both those guys can also throw it, get out on the corner and run. We're just going to try to utilize their talents in different ways.

Has your coaching life or personal life been changed at all after you became the winningest coach in Southern Conference history last season?

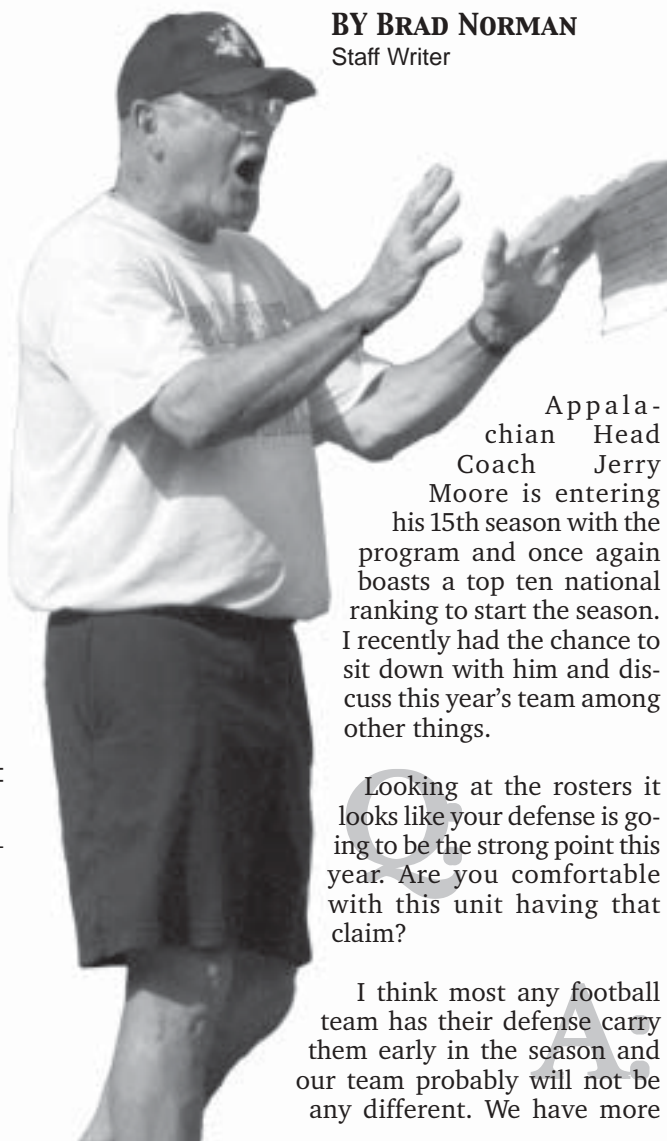
Well not really. I don't like to dwell too much on that. Obviously, I was very flattered and proud to have what people are calling "the record." That is simply because I've been at Appalachian...going on 15 years and I have had a terrific run of players and coaches. It's all a combination of those things that made that take place. If you asked me today and my life depended on it, I could not tell you how many wins I've had here, and that's not really important. What is important is putting that behind, going out, and having a fine year this year.

Sometimes when a football program enjoys successful

seasons for an extended period of time some of the fans, students and alumni might feel that just making the playoffs each year is not acceptable. How do you feel about that personally? Is the goal to just make the playoffs and make a run at a national title?

Our goal this year is to play to our potential. I will refer back to last year and we did not come anywhere close to playing to our potential. I can't tell you what this football team will be like. The players would like to win the national championship. If we had to have a goal then sure, we would like to win the Southern Conference and we would like to win a national championship. But probably, something that exceeds that with me, is playing to our potential and trying to play at a level above what we're physically capable of playing. And if you can do that then I think you're going to have a successful team and you're going to win your share of games.

James Nix | The Appalachian



O F F E N S E

Runningback

This is the Sean Jackson show for now. He may be listed at 5'6", but that's a stretch by any definition of the term. However, he is fast. A member of the SoCon record-setting 4x100 meter relay team last spring, he rushed for 588 yards on just 111 attempts last season. The backup is Jose White, a fifth-year senior with just 401 rushing yards in his career. He does, however, add a dimension to the offense as a pass-catching running back.

With the immortal "Hoove" (Brad Hoover) graduated, it is now Stewart Adams' world, and the rest of us are just taking up space. Adams is a converted linebacker who provides a defensive toughness to the offense.

Tight End

Daniel Bettis saw action as a freshman last season, catching three touchdown passes as the second tight end. This season he will be the firm starter. Billy Brink, a converted quarterback, and Sean Dunaway, a converted defensive tackle, are fighting for second on the depth chart.

Wide Receiver

Easily the deepest position on the field, with veteran players all over the depth chart. Sterling Hayward is the big-game receiver, racking up 4 catches against Georgia Southern and 6 against Wofford. He must find the end zone early and often for this offense to click. Jermane Little and Davon Fowlkes are known for their special teams play, often being highlighted as the cream of the SoCon crop. Fowlkes is the leading returning receiver, as he caught 36 passes last fall, but like Hayward failed to find the end zone all season.

Quarterback

Arguably the most important position on the field, ASU is blessed to have two competent quarterbacks ready to lead the team. Richie Williams, a redshirt sophomore, will be given the first chance to lead the troops. Williams saw action in seven games last year, starting the first three while Joe Burchette recovered from injury. Williams was recently elected captain by his teammates, a strong sign of loyalty to be given to such a young player. William's backup for now is Eric Elsener, a transfer from Air Force. Elsener brings in three years of experience running Air Force's option offense and an "aw shucks, I am just happy to play" attitude.

Offensive Line

Michael Porter returns for his final season at ASU. His season was over last year after the third game. He missed spring drills for the second straight year. Daniel Utley steps into the starting lineup after one season as a reserve guard. At 6'4", 325 lbs., he is one of the biggest linemen on the roster. Anthony Lawing, a junior, is hot on his heels looking for the starting nod. Both should be capable as blockers. Ross Grall is another new starter on the line. Grall, a junior, will be expected to handle the pre-snap blocking assignments on the line of scrimmage. He played some last year, 36 snaps in total. His backup is Tommy Sofield, a freshman that arrived on campus from Hargrave Military Academy in time for spring drills. Brian Billings started against Hawaii, but Jeremy Robertson played 50 percent of the plays. Robertson, a redshirt freshman, is a massive 6'3", 285 lbs. He's one of the quicker linemen on the roster, a must for the ASU option offense.

B R E A K D O W N

Linebackers

Sam Smalls returns to start at weak side linebacker and figures to lead the team in tackles again (122 last season). Smalls is the heart of this defense, a ferocious player who has a real knack for finding the ball carrier. His toughness is something he brings to the game that cannot be coached. Junior Jerelle Carter started 7 games last season and is the early starter at middle linebacker. Behind Carter on the depth chart are juniors Travis Washington and Zodd Kelly. Stewart Adams will be a missing face from the linebacker corps as he is currently penciled in as the starting fullback. Daniel Traylor, who was all over the field against Hawaii, figures to be the starter at strongside linebacker despite his natural position being a defensive back. The team could rotate Traylor to the defensive backfield, which would leave red shirt freshman William Mayfield as the starter. A player to watch out for is Brad West. West had seven starts last season due to a rash of injuries and performed well. He was also injured later in the year, keeping him out of action. West could make a strong push to earn playing time as the season progresses.

Special Teams

Erik Rockhold will resume field goal duties after sitting out last year in favor of Mark Wright. Rockhold was the kickoff specialist last year and converted on his only extra-point attempt. In 2001 he connected on 10-of-13 field goal tries, including 7-of-7 from 30-39 yards. Despite Wright's graduation, Rockhold is more accurate and as powerful. Nate McKinney returns for his final campaign as the team's punter and is a near lock to attain all SoCon honors. A four year starter, McKinney ranks No. 4 in Appalachian's history in career punting yards and is known for blasting punts 50 yards. Punt return specialist Davon Fowlkes and has a chance to become the team's best.

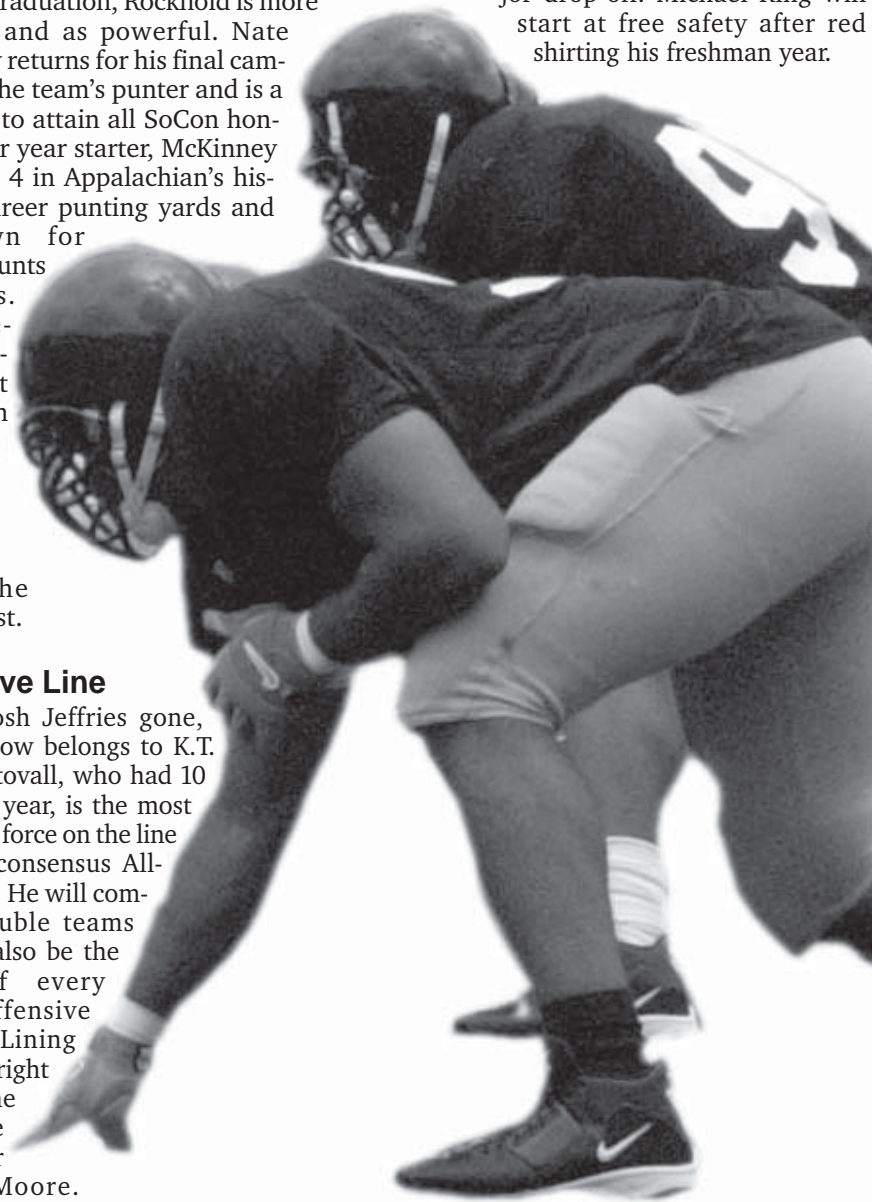
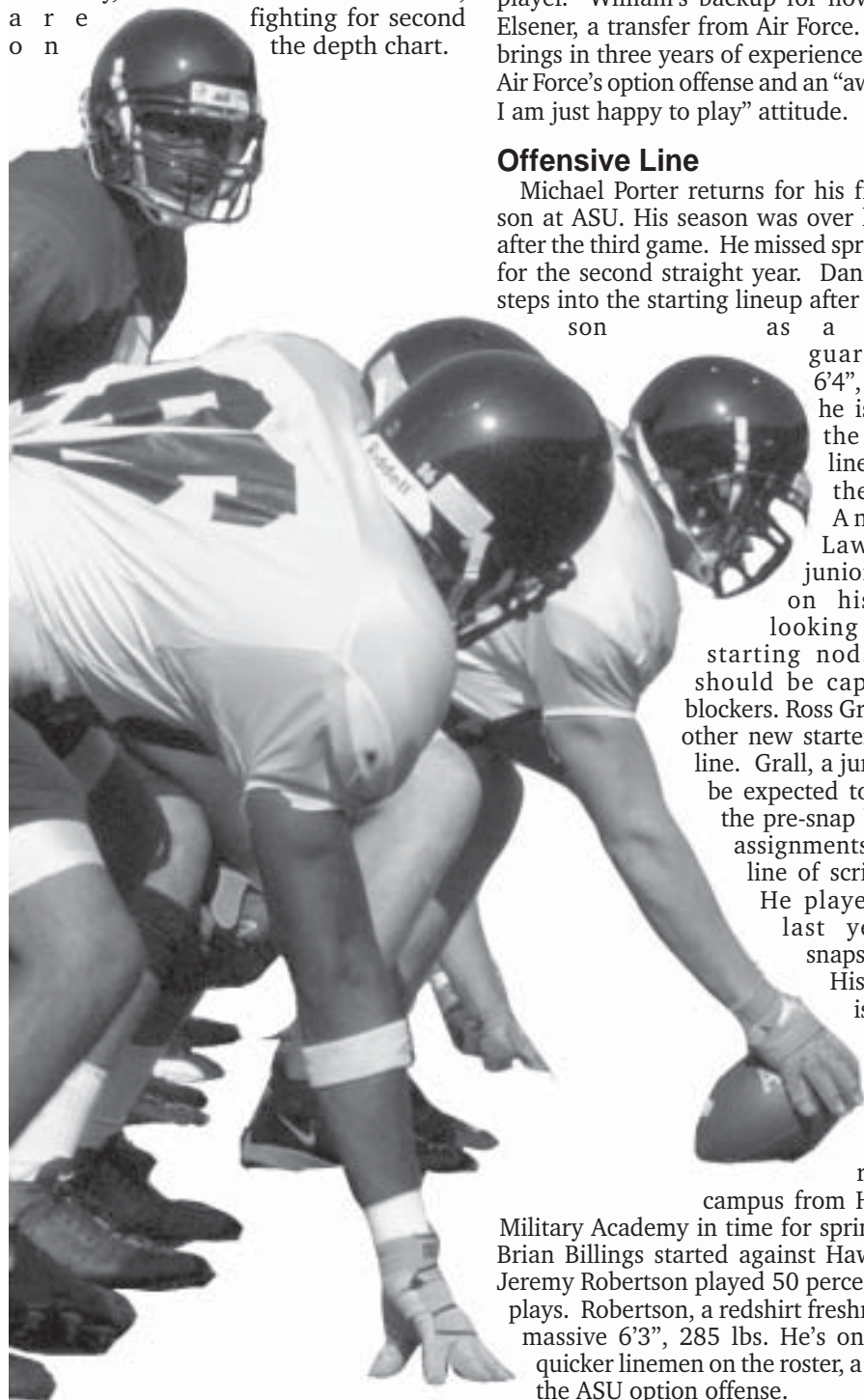
Defensive Line

With Josh Jeffries gone, the line now belongs to K.T. Stovall. Stovall, who had 10 sacks last year, is the most disruptive force on the line and is a consensus All-American. He will command double teams and will also be the focus of every team's offensive strategy. Lining up on the right side of the line will be senior Leon Moore.

Moore started 11 games last season and played a "rover" position on the defensive line, playing wherever he was needed. Moore is more comfortable as a defensive end, and with Stovall getting most of the attention, Moore could have a monster year. The interior of the defensive line will be tested early because of their youth. The starters so far are Omarr Byrom and George Carr. Byrom is a red shirt freshman and Carr is a true freshman. Both players will be pressured early on in the season to perform. If their youth presents a problem in their play, senior Jason Blalock will get the chance to play. The defensive end position might be the most talented on the roster.

Defensive Backs

Brash and outspoken Derrick Black leads a talented Mountaineer secondary full of playmakers. Black, who might be best known for his return in the Furman game, is the incumbent starter at right cornerback and is probably the biggest playmaker on the team. Starting opposite Black is the lesser-known but equally as talented Jay Lyles. Both Lyles and Black made the All-SoCon team last season and they give Appalachian the best set of cornerbacks in the conference. The injury to Nygel Rogers is a huge blow. Rogers was the starting strong safety before a torn ACL sidelined him, probably for the remainder of the season. Replacing Rogers will be Jeremy Wiggins, a true freshman. Wiggins will not be able to replace the leadership Rogers brought to the defense, but he's talented enough that the secondary should not have a major drop-off. Michael King will start at free safety after red shirting his freshman year.



Josh Brown | Chief Photographer

Josh Brown | Chief Photographer

COMPILED BY
HUGH KELLENBERGER
AND
BRAD NORMAN

Football Preview 2003

Heavyweights: K.T. Stovall and Sean Jackson prove size doesn't matter

BY HUGH KELLENBERGER
Staff Writer

Rocky Hunt. Jimmy Freeman. Jamie Lovern. Josh Jeffries. K.T. Stovall. ASU has been blessed to have a long line of defensive linemen that have carried the defense on their backs. With the former four long gone, Stovall becomes the heir apparent and possibly the last in this era of ASU football.

"He is just like all the other ones [Jeffries, Watson]," head coach Jerry Moore said. "He's really solid, mature."

Stovall, a 6'2", 245 lb. Defensive end from Fayetteville, has been around for five years now. After redshirting in 1999, he has consistently been a force on defense. In 2000, he recorded 38 tackles. In 2001 he was second on the team and third in the Southern Conference with 8.5 sacks.

2002 was the year Stovall came into his own. He led the team in sacks with 10, was second on the roster with 15 tackles for loss and 10 quarterback pressures. However, Jeffries was the senior and received all the accolades: All-American, Buck Buchanan award finalist, All-SoCon. Jeffries was the subject of headline stories for his involvement in the Black Saturday play.

"[Jeffries] liked to win," Stovall said. "I took that from him when he left. Whenever he lined up, he wanted to win that battle. He played hard all the time."

Stovall is finally getting some recognition. He was a unanimous choice to the All-SoCon team and a pre-season All-American in 1-AA football.

Western Carolina defensive end Michale Spicer was named the pre-season SoCon Defensive Player of the Year, but was just an honorable mention All-American candidate.

"Everyone loves to get a lot of praise, that's why you play the game," Stovall said.

Stovall is also listed as a candidate for the 2003 Buck Buchanan award, given annually to 1-AA's top defensive player.

"If I win the award, and we don't make the playoffs, or if I win and we get knocked out in the first round, it's not going to mean much," Stovall said. "Individual goals are important, but it doesn't overshadow your team not doing well."

Casual fans will likely try to compare Stovall to Jeffries, but those comparisons are unwanted.

"I am not looking to duplicate what [Jeffries] did here. No one else is going to come through here and be another Josh Jeffries. All I can be is another K.T. Stovall," Stovall said.

Stovall said that he never felt in the shadow of Jeffries. Stovall does not have the supporting cast that the others did, however.

Leon Moore is the other defensive end, but had just 3.5 sacks last season as a defensive tackle. This season's defensive tackles are young. Omar Byrom is a red shirt freshman, and George Carr started against Hawaii but is not even listed in the media guide. Jason Blalock is a senior, like Moore, but has never started a game.

"I understand it's probably going to be a little bit more double-teaming with Josh gone, I am expecting that. Hopefully, I can play the best of my game and see if [the opponents] can keep up," Stovall said. "If they focus on me, there are three other good linemen to make the play."

The players voted for captains last week, picking Stovall to be the defensive captain.

"That was a big honor for me. I've always wanted to be somebody teammates could look up to, come to for advice or a question about something they don't understand," Stovall said.

"The thing K.T. does is bring some calmness to the situation. He's a locker room guy who isn't a 'rah-rah' guy. He doesn't get up in the locker room and start hollering," Moore said.

Jeffries and Watson were both cut last week from the Tennessee Titans and the Atlanta Falcons, respectively.

"The thing that K.T. has that rest of those guys didn't have is height. He's so much taller than the rest of them," Moore said.

"[The NFL] is always a goal, but I am not concentrated on it right now. I am not really going to worry about it 'til that time comes," said Stovall.

Even with the recognition he is finding, Stovall remains with his nose to the grindstone.

"I want to get better at everything. I want to become a better pass rusher. I am not happy with my pass rush right now," Stovall said.

"He's everything you want your son to be like when he grows up," Moore said. "He's kind of the All-American boy and the All-American football player."

BY BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

Sean Jackson is listed at 5'6", but in reality, he's probably closer to 5'4".

He's the smallest player on the roster, yet the bulk of the Appalachian running game rests on his 5'4" shoulders.

It may sound daunting, but Jackson has always faced daunting tasks and he's not about to back down now.

When he was a senior in high school he ran for 1970 yards and a dazzling 34 touchdowns.

One game, early on in the first quarter, Jackson was running around the end zone and got slammed by the opposing defensive end. The hit was so brutal that it caused Jackson to vomit over the course of the next three quarters.

In the fourth quarter, with his team down, Jackson came in the game and shredded the opposing defense to give his team the comeback win.

That game and even this season at Appalachian is a culmination of a lifetime of playing football.

"I've played football for as long as I can remember," Jackson said.

"I started playing pee-wee football when I was about seven or eight and I've just kept on playing since then," Jackson said.

Jackson played different positions at an early age but always knew he was a running back.

"In pee-wee football, I really just did what the coaches told me as far as my position, but I was always pretty fast and I liked running it," Jackson said.

So how fast is he now?

He's a member of the record-setting Appalachian squad that ran the fastest 4X100 meters in conference history.

He has also qualified for the NCAA national championships in the 100-meter dash.

When you combine Jackson's skills with the speediest quarterback in recent memory, the Appalachian backfield is far-removed from its somewhat plodding offense last season.

With Richie Williams and Jackson lining up together, the Mountaineers have two players who have the potential to score every single time they touch the ball.

"I like the offense this season because of the speed," Jackson said.

"I love running an option because it's easier for me to get to the corner and break longer runs but it's also really hard because Richie is so fast. It's really hard to keep up with him," Jackson said.

Not only does Jackson have the physical speed to have a successful season, he also has the mental prowess and work ethic.

"I probably lifted four times a week and ran four times a week during the whole off-season," Jackson said.

And as far as his stature is concerned, Jackson sees no reason why his height should prohibit him from having a big season.

"A lot of times when I'm running the ball I'm able to slip through into the hole behind the lineman without anyone really getting a good look at where the play is going," Jackson said.

"I've always heard stuff about my height but I don't let it affect my game."

Maybe even as remarkable as Jackson's skills is his relationship with slot-back Jose White.

White has super soft hands for a running back and will likely catch a lot of balls out of the backfield as well as see action in different situations, such as third down and possibly goal line.

"Jose and I are almost like brothers," Jackson said.

"We lift together, we run together and we hang out and watch film together. Sometimes we'll play video games and we'll play as Appalachian in NCAA College Football 2004. He'll try to get me mad and he'll substitute himself in for me, but that's OK. I just leave myself in."

Adding a dash of youth to the senior halfback duo is true freshman Alan Atwater.

Atwater is currently third on the team's depth chart, but after one game against Hawaii, he leads all running backs in rushing yardage.

"Alan came out and had a great camp and even though he's a freshman he's going to need to step in and produce, something he is capable of doing," Jackson said.

Fan favorite Joey Hoover is gone at full back, leaving a platoon of Stewart Adams, Barrett Rogers and Corey Jones.

As far as any goals go for the team, Jackson said winning is number one.

"We want to come out and win games and win the conference title and compete for a national title as well," Jackson said.

And does Jackson have any personal goals?

"I just want to help the team win," Jackson said.

"But I think I am going to go out there and show people that small players are important and that they can accomplish big things."



Football Preview 2003

Hayward enters season with 25-game catch record, dreams of future in NFL

HUGH KELLENBERGER
Staff Writer

BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

"I am not going to lie, I think about it sometimes in the game if I don't have a catch," wide receiver Sterling Hayward said.

Hayward is in the middle of a 25-game catch streak, dating back to his freshman year. In the semi-finals against Montana, he caught 4 passes for 48 yards.

Since then, with the exception of two games missed from injury, he has caught at least one pass in every game.

"9 out of 10 times, he's going to catch the ball," said backup quarterback Eric Elsener.

Hayward, a senior listed at 6'0", 180 lbs, played in just 10 games last fall, hauling in 32 receptions for 346 yards.

"Last year, it was hard coming back after two games, getting back into the rhythm. I wasn't really in sync with everyone," Hayward said. "I didn't have a summer to work out with everybody, get my timing down."

Hayward has failed to score a TD since the eighth game of the 2001 season, against Chattanooga.

"He's more of a possession receiver to tell you the truth. He doesn't run the real deep routes," quarterback Richie Williams said. "It's important for him to get the ball, so he can get the first downs, push the [chains]."

"Your goal is always to score touchdowns, because if you score touchdowns you win the game. In the long run though, I'll give up the catch streak for a touchdown," Hayward said. "When I do get in there, you'll know. I

guarantee."

In a bit of a surprise move, Williams was named captain two weeks ago by his teammates.

"I lead by example, not by word of mouth. Just by not giving me the title of captain doesn't mean I am not a captain," Hayward said.

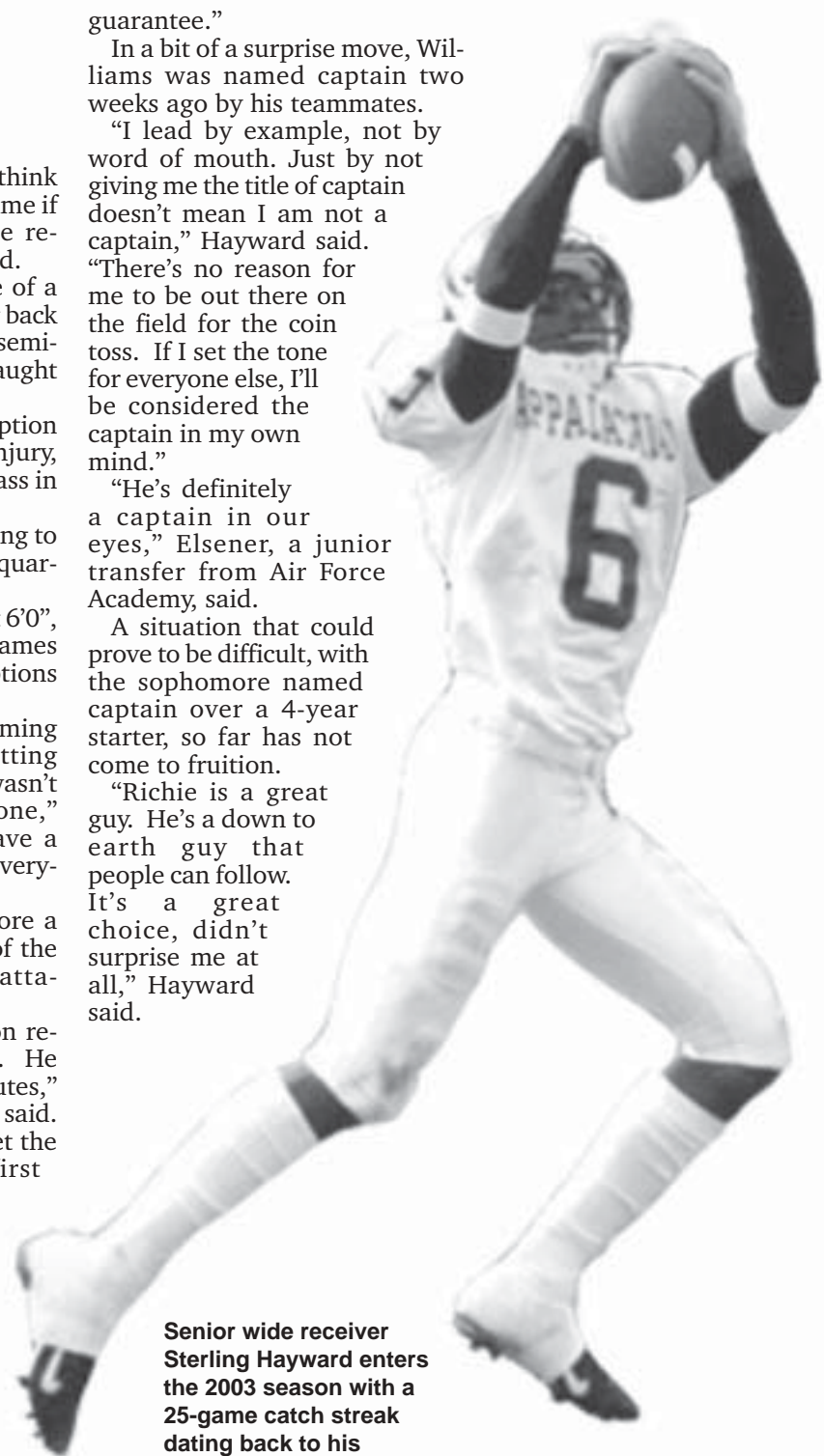
"There's no reason for me to be out there on the field for the coin toss. If I set the tone for everyone else, I'll be considered the captain in my own mind."

"He's definitely a captain in our eyes," Elsener, a junior transfer from Air Force Academy, said.

A situation that could prove to be difficult, with the sophomore named captain over a 4-year starter, so far has not come to fruition.

"Richie is a great guy. He's a down to earth guy that people can follow. It's a great choice, didn't surprise me at all," Hayward said.

Hayward said.



Senior wide receiver Sterling Hayward enters the 2003 season with a 25-game catch streak dating back to his freshman year.

File Photo

Williams said that he expected it to be Hayward or running backs Jose White and Sean Jackson, not himself.

Hayward and Williams have known each other since their prep days in South Carolina.

"He can tell me to speed it up, I can tell him to speed it up," Hayward said. "When the blitz is coming, and you got to cut your route short, that he's going to put it there on time."

After getting into the semi-final round of the 1-AA playoffs in 2000, ASU has been stopped shorter and shorter into the playoffs each year.

"I've got the experience of the semi-finals and it would be great to let these guys experience it. It's something I want to do, get [to

the semi-finals] and beyond," Hayward said.

After this season, Hayward's focus turns to the NFL.

"It's a dream. If I get there, it'll be one of the biggest and happiest days of my life," Hayward said.

Hayward said that he would definitely move to another position, such as return specialist or cornerback, if needed.

"Whatever pays the bills. As long as I am in the NFL I am straight," Hayward said.

The quarterback battle between Williams and Elsener has continued to be a spot to watch for ASU this season. Hayward has tallied his vote for Williams, unofficially at least.

"Richie probably has a little bit

more ability than [Elsener], but Eric is not far away,"

Hayward said. "Just look out, he might push for it, Richie might pull away."

One of the major strengths for ASU's offense is the wide receiver corps.

Hayward, Davon Fowlkes, Jermaine Little and Brandon Turner, among others, are all reliable options.

"They're all hard workers, don't drop very many balls," Elsener said. "They're smart guys, they know when to convert the routes and not."

Perhaps the best way to describe Hayward is short, sweet and to the point.

"He's good people," Williams said.

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Football Preview 2003

Playoff spot possible for Mountaineers with successful 2003 season

BRAD NORMAN
Staff Writer

Date: September 6, 2003
Opponent: at Eastern Kentucky (8-4 in 2002)
Series Record: 6-2, Appalachian
Analysis: Appalachian will win if they play consistent on offense and minimize turnovers. Defensively, the Mountaineers should be able to shut down ECU. The Colonels lost their starting running back from last year and their returning quarterback, Chuck Marks barely had 400 yards last season. He will not strike fear into any hearts. Eastern Kentucky needs their passing game to erupt. ECU will be hard pressed to run the ball and their passing game is not nearly as explosive as Appalachian's. The home field advantage will also need to play a big factor for Eastern Kentucky to come away with a win.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: September 20, 2003
Opponent: Morehead State (9-3 in 2002)
Series Record: 0-0
Analysis: Morehead State is probably the most unknown team on the schedule. Appalachian must contain Eagles quarterback David Caudill. Caudill ran for 530 yards last year, second on the team, and he also threw for 3,000 more. His top three receivers all returned and his top running back didn't, so look for Morehead State to run a lot of bootlegs and option passes. Morehead State needs to force at least three turnovers and manage the clock. Appalachian can score on this team and Eagles defensive back Charles Byrd will need to have a huge day in the secondary for them to have a shot.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: September 27, 2003
Opponent: at The Citadel (3-8 in 2002)
Series Record: 21-10, Appalachian
Analysis: This game might get a

little tricky. Richie Williams will need to have a monster day, both throwing and running the ball. Citadel's defensive backs are solid but unspectacular and Williams should have time to throw as well. James Greene and Shawn Grant both return for the Bulldogs, they combined for just four interceptions last year. Joe Burchette carved up their secondary last year and Williams will need to do the same. If new Citadel quarterback Willie Simmons plays up to his hype, The Citadel becomes a dangerous team. Simmons played for the Citadel also has the home crowd behind them and they return nine starters on offense and defense. I smell an upset.
Prediction: The Citadel

Date: October 4, 2003
Opponent: East Tennessee State (4-8 in 2002)
Series Record: 31-13-1, Appalachian
Analysis: Appalachian cannot look ahead to Furman. This will be the easiest team the Mountaineers will face in a month, so they need to take care of business. The Mountaineers follow this game with a brutal three game stretch against Furman, Georgia Southern and Wofford, so the team might be looking ahead. If the team is focused, they should win handily. East Tennessee State could make it close if they're on a huge kick because this is the last year the school will have a football program. All of their players will be playing every play like it's their last...because it is their last. This team could give Appalachian some huge problems defensively, returning every defensive starter but one.

This game will end up being much closer than people think.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: October 11, 2003
Opponent: at Furman (8-4 in 2002)
Series Record: 20-9-3, Furman
Analysis: Furman could very well explode into as big a rivalry as Georgia Southern due to Appalachian's improbable victory last season. A great sign of this comes from different alumni and campus organizations who are going to make shirts that say "Go for two!" as well as travel down to South Carolina to watch the game. For game strategy, Appalachian simply cannot allow Furman to have 40 minutes of possession like they did last year. The build-up to this game will be enormous and Furman's players and fans will be incredibly pumped for this game. Furman will be very confident, maybe a little overconfident, due to a cupcake conference schedule up to this point. Appalachian's running game will have to consistently move the chains and the Mountaineers must not let their emotions overwhelm them. Furman will need to have found a passing game at this point in the season and funnel their emotions. No one on this team has forgotten how they lost last year, and on the same token, Appalachian will be determined to show that last year was no fluke. As mentioned earlier, emotions and the control of emotions will have a huge part in deciding this outcome. At this point in the season, I think Appalachian is running on all cylinders.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: October 18, 2003
Opponent: Georgia Southern (11-3 in 2002)
Series Record: 9-8-1, Georgia Southern
Analysis: Appalachian will win if they aren't intimidated, they stop the option and they force at least two or three turnovers. Georgia

Southern decimated teams last year with the triple option. Quarterback Chaz Williams and fullback Jermaine Austin both ran for over 1400 yards last season and Williams accounted for 27 touchdowns by himself. Appalachian hasn't beaten this team since 1999, so seniors like Sam Smalls, K.T. Stovall, Sean Jackson and Sterling Hayward will be jacked for this game. Georgia Southern will need to score early and often, taking the crowd out of the game, and then rely on their running game to wear down the Mountaineer defense. No matter how many fans show up, and hopefully it's a lot, Southern will come ready to play and they won't be intimidated. All of their key components on offense return, but the Eagles did lose their top two tacklers. Southern will try to force Appalachian into a shoot-out, and if they succeed, they will win. If Appalachian's first priority is stopping Southern rather than matching them, this game will not be decided until the final two minutes. The alumni and students who follow this team should circle this date on their calendar right now. All casual fans should pick this game to go to if they only go to one game all year.
Prediction: Appalachian in overtime and the goalposts come down

Date: October 25
Opponent: at Wofford (9-3 in 2002)
Series Record: 11-8, Appalachian
Analysis: Appalachian will be hard-pressed to continue their predicted winning streak because they will already be exhausted from playing the top two opponents in the conference in consecutive weeks. Everyone on this team remembers how Wofford marched in on homecoming day last year and ran all over the field. Wofford lost their top two rushers but are still capable of running for over 200 yards in their Wingbone offense and they need run the ball like they did last year. Wofford had 57 rush-

ing attempts and three passing attempts in last year's game and will probably have the same strategy this year. They also held Appalachian to 19 points last year and they lost only one starter on defense. Look for the Terriers rushing attack to weaken an already tired Mountaineer defense.
Prediction: Wofford

Date: November 1, 2003
Opponent: Chattanooga (2-10 in 2002)
Series: 17-9, Appalachian
Analysis: The Mocs are probably the least talented team on the schedule and they are not going to scare too many teams. They have also defeated Appalachian just two times since 1985. They return both starting receivers but not their quarterback from last year, giving them two decent weapons but not a passer capable of getting them the ball. The Mountaineers finally get a break in their schedule, and will probably use this as a "recovery" game. Expect a low scoring game, somewhere in the 17-6 or 14-10 range.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: November 8, 2003
Opponent: at Elon (4-7 in 2002)
Series: 21-9-1, Appalachian
Analysis: Appalachian and Elon have not played since 1971, but the Mountaineers should pick up right where they left off. The Phoenix have two of their top three rushers coming back as well as both quar-

terbacks, who were rotated throughout the season last year. On defense, Elon returns all eleven starters, which should enable them to stay close for at least a quarter. But no matter how many starters Elon returns, the bottom line is that they just are not at App's level yet and they should not pose any serious threat.
Prediction: Appalachian

Date: November 15, 2003
Opponent: Western Carolina (7-4 in 2002)
Series: 49-17-1, Appalachian
Analysis: In the annual Battle for the Old Mountain Jug, Western Carolina will come into Boone with a slightly better squad than the one that gave Appalachian fits in Cullowhee last year. Every year, Western seems poised to make a jump in the standings and finish at one of the top three or four teams in the conference; this could very well be the year. Appalachian will be favored because they are a better team and they are playing at home. I look for Western to jump out to an early lead and the Mountaineers will chip away at it all game. Thanks to the previous two opponents, Appalachian should be well rested and in top form, which might be too much for this Western squad.
Prediction: Appalachian

Final Record : 8-3, 6-2 in conference play, good enough to claim a playoff spot

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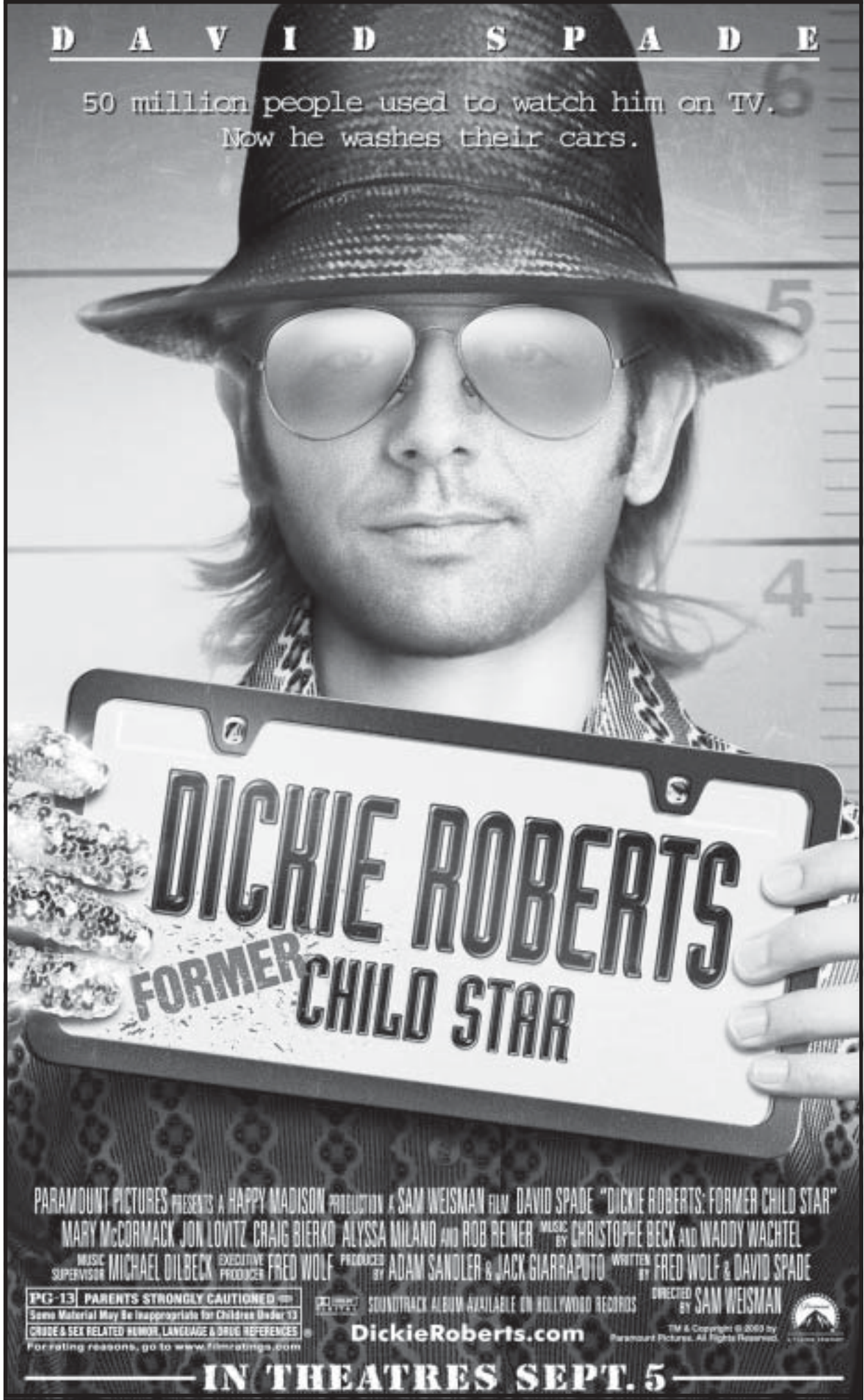
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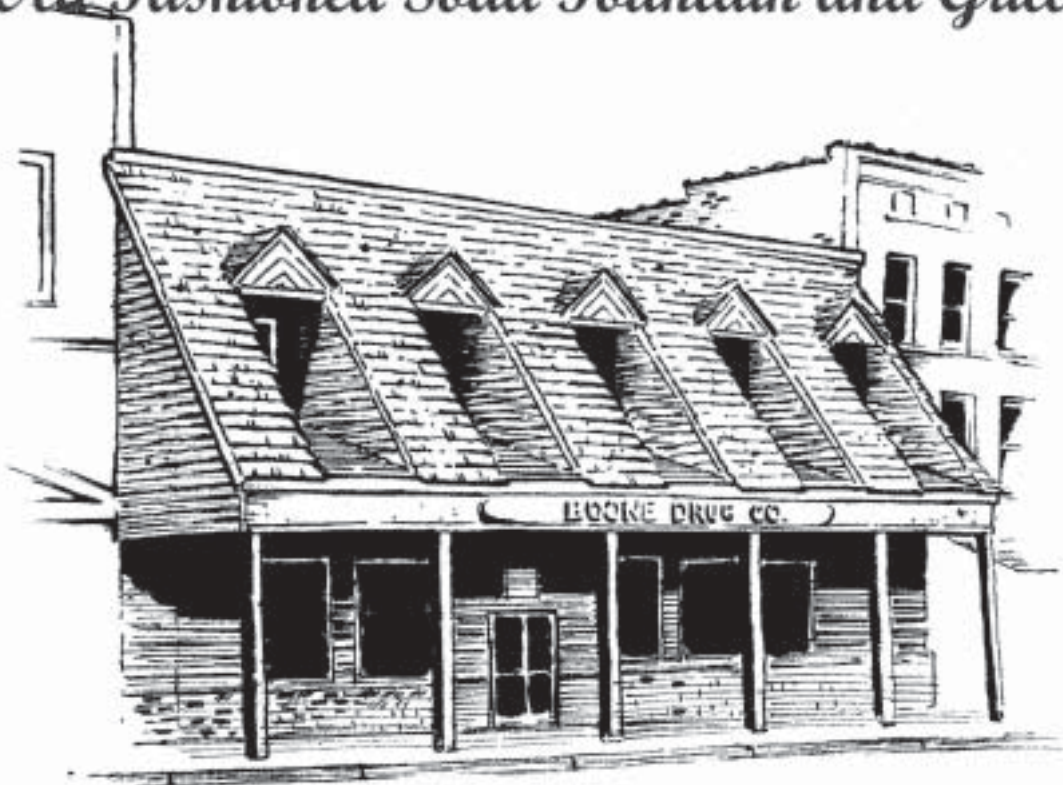
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FOOTBALL PREVIEW 2003

HUGH KELLENBERGER

Staff Writer

The Southern Conference is typically one of the strongest conferences in 1-AA college football. Three teams, Georgia Southern, Furman and ASU all made the 1-AA playoffs last season. Some said Wofford should have made it, as well.

Below is a team-by-team breakdown of the Southern Conference, in predicted order of finish.

1) Georgia Southern- GSU will continue to be number one until proven wrong. DT Freddy Pesqueira (94 tackles, 7 sacks), LB Joe Scott (116 tackles) and S David Young (75 tackles) all have departed from the defense, which at times carried the 2002 team. The other Young, James, is the top returning defensive player, posting 68 tackles with 3 INT last season. Offense will always be what the Eagles are known for. QB Chaz Williams returns after rushing for 1422 yards with 27 TD last fall. He threw just 100 times, but connected on 45 for 1022 yards and 9 TD. FB Jermaine Austin has firmly taken the reins of the offense from Adrian Peterson after posting an All-American campaign in the first season of Peterson's absence. He should improve on his 1416 yards rushing and 8 TD. There are no major holes in the Eagle's armor. They're strong, fast and tough. This is what we've come to expect of GSU, even under second-year head coach Mike Sewak.

2a) ASU

2b) Furman- After GSU, all the uncertainty begins. Quarterback Billy Napier is gone, taking his almost 2500 yards passing with him. Bo Moore is now entrusted with the offense. He has a few weapons in his holster in Hindley Brigham (762 yards rushing) and Isaac West (39 receptions, 7 TD). Having Bear Rinehart back wouldn't hurt, but he has left the Paladin Universe. The key for Furman will be finding a defense that can stop folks. Two starters on the defensive line are gone from the worst pass rush in the league last year. By the end of the

year, we might be calling this unit France. Maurice Duncan and Keith Johnson, a couple of sophomore cornerbacks, will share the spot left open by Rodney Johnson's departure (6 INT). You can bet that ASU has been circled on the schedule since it was released. After last year's Black Saturday debacle, the Paladins get to play in Furman this year. Just some advice for head coach Bobby Lamb: go for two.

4) The Citadel- That's right, The Citadel. The Citadel, owners of a 3-8 record last season. The Citadel, who lost their starting quarterback. But think about this. The Citadel now has Willie Simmons, a Clemson transfer, taking the snaps for them. In his first game with the Bulldogs, he led the offense to 64 points against Charleston Southern. DE/LB Michael Ballentine (9 sacks in 2002) and LB Travis Hodge (68 tackles) lead a solid defense. After last Saturday's routing of Charleston Southern, the team goes on the road to Delaware, Maryland, and WCU. If they make it out of that stretch alive, the team should be in good enough shape to finish above .500, but not make the playoffs.

5) Wofford- Any team that knocks off Georgia Southern and ASU in the same season deserves some credit. So yes, Wofford Terriers, you sure were a "terror" last year. But this is a new year, and will likely be a more difficult one. The top two rushers packed their bags and left. The entire starting linebacker corps graduated. Oh, and a guy with 15.5 sacks last season left as well. However, Wofford is blessed to have FB J.R. McNair (707 yards, 9 TD) and a QB like Jeff Zolman (564 yards rushing, 476 passing). The Terriers could be in a position for a playoff spot heading into their Oct. 25 meeting against ASU, but their hopes will end there and the coming weeks, where they must go to The Citadel, play ETSU at home, then end the season against Furman.

6) East Tennessee State- This is the last season for ETSU Football. It's the last season to make some Mini-Dome magic, so the Bucs have to drink/win



Josh Brown | Chief Photographer

During last season's Sept. 28 game, ASU's defensive lineman K.T. Stovall (93) attempts to block a pass by Justin Woodberry. The Mountaineers beat the Bulldogs 37-28.

'til they get their fill. A close loss to 1-A Eastern Michigan should give ETSU some confidence heading into the meat of their schedule. Red shirt freshman Carl Meadows was 14 of 23 for 120 yards against EMU. He must prove to be a stabilizing force after the constant shuffling at QB in the past few seasons. DE Lamar Beam (73 tackles, 6 sacks in 2002), CB Tony tiller (41 tackles, 1 INT) and S Montreal Harkley (6 INT) are the leaders to a strong defense. ETSU will be successful if they beat whom they should beat and snare a couple of non-conference victories and maybe an upset of someone in the big five.

7) Western Carolina- This is a rebuilding year for the Catamounts. ASU and WCU are technically rivals, but ASU has consistently beaten and worn out the Catamounts. This is the year where some of the lesser SoCon teams get their chance to do the same. QB Brian Gaither completed only 46.9 percent of his passes last season, with 5 TD and 8 INT. Manny DeShauteurs, the first RB with the chance to start, averaged less than 4 yards a carry last season. After Lamont Seward (32 receptions in 2002), the wide receiver corps is thin. Sure, Western has a terrific defense. DE Michale Spicer (56 Tackles, 11 sacks) is one of the country's top rushers. DE Nick McNeil and LB Rod Dunlap are not too far behind Spicer. Anything more than two conference wins may be asking too much for this version of the Catamounts.

8) Chattanooga- The scariest part about this team is that they could be 3-1 after the non-conference portion of their schedule. Of course, they could also end the season on a 5-game losing streak and surprise no one. Thus is life for the Mocs. Good enough

to beat some worse teams, yet not good enough to rise out of the deep SoCon cellar. Jason Jones did have 57 receptions and 10 TD last season. However, that was at WR; he is now the starting RB. LB Blake Kirkland (64 tackles) and DB Greg Knight (50 tackles, 2 INT) are pretty good defensive players. Head coach Rodney Allison is in his first season as the head coach, and his youthful enthusiasm should help matters. He has been known to be a defensive-minded coach, which is a good thing considering the Mocs gave up 31.4 points last year.

9) Elon- VMI left the SoCon for the Big South, so Elon comes into take their place. Elon has a lack of SoCon quality players right now, but the recent additions and improvements to their facilities should make it easier to recruit in the coming years. For now, they have to rely on what is already in the cupboard and it's not much. Rashaud Palmer is a pretty good halfback, rushing for 9 TD last fall. LB Mike Warren is not a bad player either. In a few years, this will be a team to contend with. In 2003, not so much.



Josh Brown | Chief Photographer

Mountaineer linebacker Sam Smalls tackles a Paladin player during last season's game against Furman. Appalachian squeezed by with a 16-15 win over the Paladins.



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ASU's runningback Jose White receives a pass during the Mountaineers' 20-17 win over the Chattanooga Mocs on Nov. 2.



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