

Braves fall on Homecoming to end streak

By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

On a day where their best offensive play came on defense, the UNCP football team saw its 13-game home winning streak snapped in front of 4,358 fans celebrating Homecoming. The Braves dropped a 30-26 game against Concord on Oct. 30.

The Braves had a chance to take the lead late in the fourth quarter after regaining possession with just over three minutes to go in the game. After moving the ball 29 yards closer to the endzone, UNCP quarterback Cory Smith was picked off by Concord's Joe Greenway to kill the drive and the winning streak.

UNCP last lost over two years ago, on Oct. 13, 2007, and it was also the first time the Braves have lost two consecutive games since the end of that same inaugural season in 2007.

"We had the formation wrong. We were trying to scramble there, doing it on the line of scrimmage," Braves' head coach Pete Shinnick said of the interception.

"But, we've got to be able to execute that. We are moving, going in the right direction, with a chance to win the game. We've got to execute that," Shinnick



UNCP linebacker Adam Deese races down the sideline after stiff arming a Concord defender during his 91-yard fumble recovery touchdown. Members of the Braves' sideline and crowd react to the play in the background.

Photo by Nick Phillips

added.

Concord, who came into the game with the fifth-best total offense in the country, finished with 417 yards of total offense. Running back Brian Kennedy picked up over 230 total yards, including 186 on the ground, to lead the Concord attack.

Quarterback Zack Grossi threw for 208 yards with three touchdown passes.

Concord came with a

hurry-up style offense against the Braves, something linebacker Adam Deese said they had not seen on film.

"It was a smart game plan by them. It speeds our rotations up, but we can't let that get to us. We have to speed our rotations up and be quicker with our reads," Deese added.

Smith finished with 117 yards through the air on a 14-of-24 passing day, with two touchdowns and the

game-changing interception.

Smith's two passing touchdowns gave him numbers 49 and 50 in his career.

Wide receiver St. Anthony Lloyd tallied seven catches for 64 yards, his third consecutive game with at least seven catches, while Josh Throckmorton and Wes Carter each pulled in touchdown receptions from Smith.

Deese and T.J. Jenkins each finished with 11 tackles to lead the Braves defense, but Deese will not be remembered for any of those tackles.

With UNCP down 10-6 with a little over a minute to go before halftime and Concord driving towards the endzone, the Braves defense forced a fumble that Deese scooped off the ground and took 91 yards for the score.

"It happened to be a big play, a forced out, and I saw the ball there. My job was not to let anybody get me," Deese said of his play.

"Although I about needed the oxygen tank there at the end," he joked.

Concord got on the scoreboard first with a 37-yard field goal before extending their lead to 10 after a touchdown pass midway through the second quarter.

The Braves' first touchdown came courtesy of Throckmorton, who broke initial tackles inside the 10-yard line before getting into the endzone on a 16-yard touchdown pass from Smith.

Deese's fumble return touchdown gave the Braves a quick, 13-10 lead, 18 seconds in fact, as Kennedy took Concord's first play on its next possession 65 yards for a single play touchdown drive.

UNCP responded moments later, moving down the field enough for a Taylor Baskett 47-yard field goal try to tie the game at 13-all at the half.

The Braves again took the lead after scoring on their opening drive of the second half, as Smith found Carter for the touchdown pass.

Another Baskett field goal, this time from 36 yards out, gave UNCP a 10 point advantage.

The Braves would not score again, however, as Concord received a 21-yard touchdown pass later in the third quarter before scoring what proved to be the game-winning touchdown at the 6:54 mark in the fourth quarter on a 8-yard touchdown pass.



Braves quarterback Cory Smith gets off a pass attempt while under pressure from a Concord defender. Smith connected on his 49th and 50th career touchdown passes in the game.

Photo by Nick Phillips

Football stumbles against Winston-Salem State

By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

The UNCP football team traveled into hostile territory on Oct. 23 against Winston-Salem State and came away with their third loss of the season in their 21-7 loss to the 21st-ranked Rams.

Winston-Salem State finished with 353 total offensive yards, while their defense held UNCP to just over 100 offensive yards in the first half.

UNCP came into the game with the top-ranked defense nationally, allowing 210.7 total yards per game before Winston-Salem State.

Despite finishing with 294 total offensive yards, the Braves fumbled their opening possession of the second half when they had a chance to pull the game close, while also turning the ball over on downs in three of their last four possessions.

"We had our opportunities in the second half to make this a good game, and we let them slip away," UNCP head coach Pete Shinnick said after the

game.

"Winston-Salem State did a good job of executing what they wanted to do. We made a couple of mistakes and gave up a couple of long balls but, other than that, I thought our defense played very well. We got going late offensively but didn't get any points. The name of the game is to score points and we didn't score enough," Shinnick added.

In contrast to UNCP's 106 first half offensive yards, the Rams totaled 248 offensive yards and were led by quarterback Kameron Smith, who threw for 207 yards with two passing touchdowns on 14-of-21 passing attempts. Smith also added Winston-Salem State's second half touchdown on the ground in the third quarter.

Smith's 207 passing yards for the Rams were right at 80 yards more than the UNCP defense was averaging giving up heading into the contest at 127.4 yards per game.

The Braves also gave up nearly double their season average on the ground, coming into the game giving up an average of 83.2

yards per game, but Winston-Salem State finished with 146 total rushing yards, led by Nicholas Cooper's 108 yard effort.

The Braves finished with 184 passing yards, with quarterbacks Cory Smith and Garrett Sutphen each totaling 92 yards. Smith finished 13-of-24 for the game, while Sutphen was 9-of-19, as both threw first half interceptions.

On the ground, Rashon Kennedy led UNCP with 55 yards on 10 rushes, while Keith Gore added 30 yards and the Braves lone touchdown.

Receiver St. Anthony Lloyd was the Braves' quarterback's favorite target on the day, as he tied a school record with eight catches while collecting 62 yards receiving.

After missing a field goal on its opening drive, Winston-Salem State scored on Kameron Smith's first passing touchdown, a 47-yarder with 7:09 to go in the first quarter. Early in the second quarter, the Rams added another score on another pass, this one from 30 yards out, to extend the lead to 14-0.



UNCP running back Keith Gore totaled 30 yards against Winston-Salem State on Oct. 23, while also scoring the Braves only touchdown in their 21-7 loss.

Photo by Nick Faulkner

The Braves finally got on the scoreboard halfway through the second quarter, when Caylon Hann gave UNCP a 42-yard punt return to set the Braves up for a four play, 13-yard scoring drive capped by Gore's two-yard touchdown.

After receiving the ball to start the second half, the Braves took possession

down inside the 20 yard line. Gore was stripped at the Winston-Salem State 15 yard line that eventually led to the Rams' final touchdown of the game.

In the game's final quarter, UNCP had possession inside Winston-Salem State's 30 yard line, but both drives came away empty handed.