ACC Post Mortems

The Winners

JOHN MACKOVIC, whose Deacons claimed one of the biggest upsets in his team's history:

"I just don't know what I'm going to say. You're not going to see a better football game than today. Our team just never gives up. When it was 38-20 at halftime, I did think we were out of the game. I told the team we could not afford to give them five turnovers in the second half.

"In the second half, a good thing was that we were able to put together a couple of drives. We just played more solid defense in the second half."

BO REIN, whose Wolfpack virtually eliminated defending champion Clemson from race:

"The fans saw two great teams going at each other period. You heard about both teams not being at full strength, but you couldn't tell it. We had a vivid picture all week of how the game would go. (We wanted) to create turnovers, get good position and score a touchdown, one we were thankful for. But I couldn't see how things would go the second half."

"Well, you saw how it worked out. The defense played super."

JERRY CLAIBORNE, whose Terrapins broke a four-game losing streak against Duke:

"It was a long dry spell. We ran better but still dropped some passes, missed wide open receivers and did not have a good passing game. Duke was hurt with some defensive men out.

"A couple of interceptions got our dobber down early but the defense came up with several big plays. We cannot make the mistakes we did against a stronger team. We turned the ball over too many times."

The Losers

DANNY FORD, whose Tigers came from behind to tie, but couldn't win it:

"We had our chances to win but didn't. We just didn't take advantage of our opportunities. We had some breakdowns but we held our poise. We had some positive things to come out of the game that we can build on.

"I thought our offense played okay for the most part. The defense had another good day. Penalties, fumbles and the kicking game hurt but it came down to four or five plays. And that's what it comes down to in all big games."

DOUG BARFIELD, whose Auburn team became another Wake Forest victim:

"First, I want to congratulate the Wake Forest players and staff for playing well and winning the ball game. Second, I feel bad for our players because they played hard and should have won. You would think a team that could score 38 points in the first half could score at least one more touchdown in the second half."

RED WILSON, Duke coach whose team became a shutout victim:

"We got beat, period, by a typical big, strong Maryland football team. We've had trouble all year long with that type offense. I'll give them credit for taking advantage of where we have been hurt the hardest."

Others

DICK CRUM, whose Tar Heels tied East Carolina with a late field goal:

"Nobody likes a tie. I don't like it and I'm sure East Carolina doesn't like it.

"Our problem in the second half was we'd drive the ball and get two or three first downs, but then we'd have one bad play. That constantly put us in bad position.

"I thought we showed a lot of character to come back on that last drive like we did. A lot of people would have quit after they lost the ball on the fumble like we did."

PAT DYE, whose East Carolina team was within seconds of a victory:

"I'm glad we didn't lose, but we didn't come to tie. You won't see any celebrating in our lockerroom today.

"I'm glad we don't have to play Kupec (Matt) again. We got to Kupec on the last drive a couple of times but it's a credit to them that he got them the tie."
Success ‘Came Early’ for Deacons

By Mary Garber
Staff Reporter

“I never put a timetable on success. I never said it would take a year or two or three or how long for us to win at Wake Forest. When success comes knocking, you had better be ready and we were. It came early for us.

The only way to keep it going is to keep the door open. That is, to remember the things you did to get here. We have done some good things and we need to remember what we did and to keep on doing it.”

“Sure, I guess it’s harder to stay on top, that’s what they say anywhere. But I think if you just remember what things got you up there and keep on doing them, you can stay.”

“We have had a good year, but I don’t think Wake Forest is where it can be even yet.”

When John Mackovic came to Wake Forest less than two years ago and talked about winning football, most people gave him a tolerant smile. His 1-10 record his first season was more or less what people expected. Now, the Deacons are 9-2, with a game against South Carolina remaining Saturday. Thus, Wake Forest could finish no worse than 8-3 and could be 9-2. Only three times in the history of Wake Forest football have the Deacons won seven or more games, going 7-2 in 1924, 7-3 in 1939 and 8-1 in 1948.

What are the reasons behind Wake Forest’s success this year?

“First, basic organization,” Mackovic replied, “that is both offensively and defensively. We made our plans and we stuck with them. We didn’t jump around. We went with a passing offense. We passed last year and sometimes it was painful, but we passed. We stuck with what we believed in, even when people wondered.

“There were many people who even early this fall did not believe in Jay Venuto (Wake Forest quarterback). They didn’t think he could do it. But we did. The things I spotted in him made me believe in him. He had the ability to dump off the ball under pressure, to scramble and toss the ball downhill. You don’t coach these things, a player either has them or he doesn’t.”

“A second reason is the development of our player strength. We worked in the weight program and our players are stronger. By being stronger, they have been able to do things they couldn’t do before, to develop skills, and this has given them confidence.”

“Third, when I came here a year-and-a-half ago, the players had faith in themselves, they believed they could do it. They were not down and out, they did not have a negative attitude. Their attitude was that we have a chance, we have a ‘new start.’ They were excited about it.”

Mackovic did not sell his football philosophy with slogans. He doesn’t believe in them. He worked with a quiet confidence in himself and in the players.

“I tried to get across to them that I believe in football, in college and in college football,” he said. “I talked about academics and their importance. I told some of the players that I knew they could do better in the classroom than they were doing. I told them they would have to do it.

“I didn’t ask which players were the trouble-makers. I took each of them as he was.

“I wouldn’t say they all started equally. Of course, they didn’t. I knew about the ones who had been starters, men like James McDonagh, Mark Lancaster, James Parker, Jackie Robinson. Of course these men had an edge. But everyone had a chance.”

“Albert Kirby was a fifth-string tailback when we came here, but he wanted to play. Now he is the starting fullback.”

How did Mackovic sell his philosophy of a passing game?

“Most of these players had little experience with a passing game as we saw it,” he said. “The passing games they knew were play-action mostly. I think the important thing about both our offensive and defensive concept is that our coaching staff has taught them well; they have put them across to the players.”

“I think it has been to our advantage, to have the kind of offense we have. It’s something different teams haven’t seen before. It has been a challenge to defenses.”

Clemson met that challenge last Saturday and was the first team to stop Wake Forest scoreless this year.

“Clemson just did a great job of combining the pass rush with good coverage,” Mackovic said. “They had the skilled people to do it with.”

***

Was the 22-21 victory over Georgia a turning point?

“The win over Georgia certainly was a big one,” Mackovic said. “When we beat Appalachian in the first game, we said we could do it. But when we beat Georgia, we said ‘we REALLY can do it.’ Sure, it would have made a difference if that (Georgia) field goal (which failed) was good at the end. But it wasn’t. After we beat Georgia, every win just added to it.”

Do the Wake Forest players have such faith in Mackovic that he believes he can do anything?

Mackovic smiled.

“I don’t know about that,” he said.

“I think the players believe that as a staff we are working to make them the best they can be. I don’t know when the really began to believe in us. You don’t reach everyone at the same time.”

“I don’t know when they accepted me, but they made me believe in them from the start. They motivated me. They made me want to be a better coach.”

“It’s a big game for us. It wasn’t always that way.”