Braves fall oncoming to end streak

By Nick Phillips

There was a day where their best offensive play came on defense, the UNCP football team saw its win-at-all-costs 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 kicking the ball 29 yards closer to the goal line, UNCP back Cory Smith was picked off by Concord's Joe Greenway to kill the drive and the winning streak.

The Braves lost their last 11 games and two consecutive games to finish out that same inaugural season in 2007.

"We had the formation 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 quicker with our reads," he said. "We are moving, going in the right direction, with a chance to win the game. We've got to execute that.

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 230 total yards, including 186 on the ground, to lead the Concorid attack.

Quarterback Zack Grossi threw for 187 yards with three touchdowns passed.

Smith finished with 117 yards through the air on a 14-24 passing day, with two touchdowns and one game-changing interception.

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

Wide receiver St. Anthony Throckmorton, who broke initial tackles inside the 10-yard line before getting into the end zone 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 Basket 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 Basket field goal, this time from 60 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-winner, as Smith kicked a 6:54 mark in the fourth quarter on a 8-yard touchdown pass.

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The UNCP football team traveled into hostile territory on Oct. 23 against Winston-Salem State. After coming 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 210.7 total yards per game. Runner back Brian Kennedy averaged giving up heading down field.

Despite finishing with 294 total offensive yards, the Braves fumbled their opportunity to score in the second half when they had a shot at scoring a touchdown, while also turning the ball over down in three of their last four drives.

We had our opportunities in the second half to make this a good game, and we failed to get the job done," 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 Cameron Smith, who threw for 207 yards with two passing touchdowns on 14-of-22 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 able to get their offense going 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 146 receiving yards.

After making a field goal on its opening drive, Winston-Salem State scored on Cameron Smith's first passing touchdown, a 47-yarder with 7:09 to go in the second quarter, the Rams added another score on another pass, this one from 30 yards out, to extend the lead to 14-6.

The Braves finally got on the scoreboard halfway through the second quarter, as Caylon Hahn 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 stopped 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.

Football stumbles against Winston-Salem State

By Nick Phillips

The UNCP running back Keith Baskett totaled 30 yards against Winston-Salem State on Oct. 22, while also scoring the Braves only touchdown in their 30-26 loss.