

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 14, 2009

Contact: Ben Greenberg, SID (479) 968-0645

TECH FOOTBALL SET TO HOST WEST GEORGIA FOR HOMECOMING 2009

RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Football will look to keep its hopes alive for an NCAA Division II Playoff berth this Saturday when the Wonder Boys welcome West Georgia to Thone Stadium at Buerkle Field for Homecoming 2009. Kickoff for Saturday's Gulf South Conference match-up is set for 6 p.m.

Tech, who is 4-2 overall and 2-2 in the GSC, enters Saturday's game ranked 10th in the latest NCAA Division II Super Regional Two Poll that was released on Monday and is in control of its own destiny in terms of making the Division II Playoffs.

"We are in control of our own destiny in terms of the playoffs," Tech Head Football Coach and Athletic Director **Steve Mullins** said. "If we can have success on Saturday we can take that next step heading into the Henderson State game next week. We still have to play three teams that all have just two losses like us in the conference."

In addition to keeping its NCAA D-II Playoff hopes alive, the Wonder Boys can also achieve something else with a win on Saturday, its sixth consecutive season of posting a non-losing record. It would be Tech's longest non-losing record streak since posting six straight non-losing campaigns from 1967-72.

Saturday's opponent, West Georgia, enters the game looking to snap a 20-game losing streak dating to the 2007 season as the Wolves are 0-6 overall this year and 0-4 in the GSC following its 34-3 loss last Thursday at home in front of "GSC-TV Live" audience against Arkansas-Monticello. During its 20-game losing streak, UWG, who is one of 13 Division II programs still winless this season, has been outscored 829-229 and this season the Wolves have been outscored, 256-61.

"West Georgia is really a hard-luck team. As you sit down and watch tape and you wonder how come this team hasn't won a game? They play well for a stretch and then something crazy happens," Mullins said. "They have good athletes, but are a little snake-bit. They'll drive the ball on offense for 80 yards and then something gets messed up inside the 10-yard line.

"We respect them and know they are capable of winning the game."

The Wolves enter the game ranked last in the league in passing (159.5 yards/game), scoring (10.2 points/game) and turnover margin (-14.0) and is 10th in the league in total offense (256.8 yards/game). On the season, UWG has scored just five offensive touchdowns and has scored 10 points in its last three games.

One area of strength for UWG's offense is its running game as the Wolves average 106.3 rushing yards per game with sophomore tailback Yusef Holloway leading the way. Holloway is fourth in the league in rushing as he averages 64.8 yards per game and is averaging 5.3 yards per carry.

"They have an ability to run the ball," the 13th-year Tech coach said. "UWG runs a very physical style of offense and it will present a challenge to us."

Tech enters the game with one of the top rushing defenses in the league as the Wonder Boys are allowing 105.8 yards per game on the ground which is third in the

latest GSC statistics and is 32nd nationally. In its last outing against Southern Arkansas, Tech held the Muleriders to minus-2 yards rushing on 18 carries and has allowed just a total of 31 yards rushing over its last two contests.

Another strength of the Wolves is its special teams as they lead the GSC in punt returns at 15.0 yards per return and are averaging 18.9 yards per kickoff return and they boast one of the top kickers/punters in the league in Adi Brkic. Brkic is averaging 37.8 yards per punt and is 4-for-8 on field goals and is 5-of-6 on extra point attempts.

"They have an excellent kicking game," Mullins said. "Brkic reminds me a lot of North Alabama's kicker and is truly a bright spot on their team."

In addition to having the league's lowest-rated offense, the Wolves also enter the game with a defense that is allowing a league-worst 451.8 yards per game and allowing a league-worst 42.7 points per game.

UWG's defense will face a Wonder Boys offense on Saturday that leads the GSC and is fourth nationally in both total offense (483.2 yards/game) and passing offense (334.2 yards/game). In addition, Tech's offense is second in the league and 10th nationally in scoring at 37.8 points per game and leads all of Division II and is third in all of NCAA Football behind BYU (62 percent) and Maine Maritime (61 percent) in third-down conversions as they have converted 58.8 percent (57-for-97) of its third-down attempts this season.

Leading the way for Tech's offense is senior quarterback **Nick Graziano** (Moraga, Calif.). The University of Nevada transfer leads the league and is sixth nationally in total offense (324.8 yards/game) and is second in the league and seventh nationally in passing yards (296.0 per game) and is third in the GSC in passing efficiency (140.4). On the season, Graziano is 134-for-226 for 1,776 yards and has thrown six interceptions and tossed 14 touchdowns and has gained 1,949 yards of total offense and has had a hand in 18 of Tech's 26 offensive touchdowns. In addition to Graziano, senior receiver **Landon Turner** (Destrehan, La.) is second in the GSC and eighth nationally in receiving yards (104.5 yards/game) and is third in the league and 13th nationally in receptions (7.0 per game) and has caught a pass in 18 consecutive games dating to the 2007 season and is 35 yards shy of becoming the ninth leading receiver in Tech history, while senior receiver/return specialist **Frantz Simeon** (Belle Glade, Fla.) leads the league and is fourth nationally in all-purpose yards (184.7 yards per game), second in the GSC in punt returns (12.3 yards/return) and fifth in kick returns (24.7 yards/return).

Mullins said that the key for his team on Saturday is that they need to care of its business from the standpoint of the kicking game and protect the football on offense and go out and play hard and execute on both sides of the ball.

Saturday's match-up will be the 12th all-time in the series dating to 1998 and Tech leads 9-2. Tech has won eight consecutive games in the series, including last season's 49-24 win in Carrollton. UWG will be playing in Russellville for the first time since the 2006 season and will be playing in the newly renovated Thone Stadium at Buerkle Field for the first time since the 2005 season. Tech leads the series 4-1 in Russellville and leads 5-1 in Carrollton.

Following Saturday's game, Tech will return to road next Saturday, Oct. 24 as the Wonder Boys travel to Arkadelphia, Ark., to face Henderson State in a 3 p.m. game at Carpenter-Haygood Stadium on the HSU campus.

-- Tech Athletics --