

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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WONDER BOYS FOOTBALL ENDS SEASON WITH LOSS TO CENTRAL ARKANSAS ON SENIOR NIGHT AT BUERKLE FIELD

RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Football closed out its 2005 season by playing Central Arkansas here on Thursday in the Governor's Classic Football Game, but this game is one that left a bad taste in the mouth as 20th-ranked Tech fell 49-17 to the 19th-ranked Bears on Senior Night at Buerkle Field.

Thursday night's meeting, which was broadcast live in front of a regional television audience by CSS (Comcast/Charter Sports Southeast) and Cox Sports, between UCA and Tech was the 84th meeting all-time between the two schools that are 45 miles apart on I-40. The series was deadlocked at 40-40-3, but UCA made sure the team's final meeting would not be memorable for the Wonder Boys as UCA earned the Governor's Cup trophy and took a 41-40-3 lead in the all-time series.

"They (UCA) are good on defense, offense and special teams and tonight, they were better than us," Tech Head Football Coach **Steve Mullins** said. "We needed to play a perfect game tonight to have a chance against UCA, and we were far from perfect."

Much like the Harding game last Saturday, Tech committed four turnovers, which led to 21 points by the Bears, a margin Tech would not be able to overcome.

"We made the same mistakes tonight, we made last week against Harding, and for the most part, made all season," Mullins said. "I thought their defense was very good tonight and is better than any time during (UCA Coach) Clint Conque's tenure."

Tech, who entered the game ranked 20th in this week's AFCA Coaches Poll and 25th in the latest D2Football.com poll, actually scored the first points of the game as they took the opening kickoff and drove the ball 62 yards in 16 plays and scored on a 35-yard field goal from senior **Mark Ewersmann** (Little Rock, Ark.) to lead 3-0 just a little over six minutes into the game. Ewersmann was one of 17 seniors playing their final games at Wonder Boys at Buerkle Field.

"The seniors have invested a lot of their heart and its sad from the standpoint of the way they went out tonight, but at the same time, as time goes on, they will look back and see that they accomplished a lot both as individuals and as a team overall," Mullins said.

In addition to Ewersmann, the other seniors playing their final home games on Thursday were punter **Glenn Wilson** (Conroe, Texas), receiver **Craig Gobroski** (Federal Way, Wash.), quarterback **Jason Campbell** (San Jose, Calif.), cornerback **Quincy Jones** (Houston, Texas), receiver **Michael Crooks** (San Jose, Calif.), safety **Andrew Jackson** (Greenville, Miss.), fullback **Chris Johnson** (Dardanelle, Ark.), linebacker **Mike Houston** (West Memphis, Ark.), center **Bailey Dickson** (Stuttgart, Ark.), offensive left guard **Jonathan Trafford** (Morrillton, Ark.), offensive left tackle **Bud Dunn** (Hampton, Ark.), offensive right tackle **Marc Stringer** (Pine Bluff, Ark.),

defensive tackle **Johnny Rawls** (Shreveport, La.), defensive tackle **Josh Scroggins** (South Haven, Miss.) and defensive tackle **Jirey Siner** (Carencro, La.).

Following Ewersmann's score, UCA would score 21 straight points to take a 21-3 lead at the half. Like Tech, UCA scored on its first possession of the game as it drove 71 yards in nine plays and scored on a 15 yard pass from Nathan Brown to Aaron Fairouz for one of his two touchdowns on the night. UCA, would then take a 14-3 lead thanks to an interception by Campbell (San Jose, Calif.), which led to 13 yard touchdown pass from Brown to Ben Faires with 4:31 left in the quarter. UCA would then score thanks to another Campbell interception and a 2-yard run by Willie Hopson, which completed a 17-play, 90 yard drive.

In the third quarter, the Bears pushed out to an insurmountable 35-3 lead thanks to a 4-yard touchdown run by running back Kentrell Rogers and a 3-yard pass from Brown to Fairouz. Rogers' touchdown run was set up thanks to fumble by Campbell on Tech's first possession of the second half, while its second score was set thanks to Tech failing to convert on fourth down at the UCA 40-yard line.

Tech would stop the bleeding somewhat as it opened the fourth quarter with two straight touchdowns, including scoring on a 50-yard fumble return by Jackson and a 9-yard touchdown scamper by redshirt freshman quarterback **Justin Ray** (Benton, Ark.), which was Ray's first rushing touchdown of his Tech career. Ray finished the night with 97 yards rushing and 85 yards passing (6-for-15 through the air).

UCA, though, would close out the game's scoring with a 3-yard touchdown run by Hopson with 6:03 left in the game and a then used a 74-yard return of a Campbell fumble by Jacob Ford with a little less than two minutes remaining in the game.

For the game, Tech outgained the high-powered Bear offense, 325-132, but was penalized 12 times for 122 yards and was only 13-for-31 passing, while the Bears were 20-for-24 through the air and scored on all six of its red zone scoring chances.

"You can not turn the ball over and expect to beat good teams and once again tonight, we hurt ourselves with penalties and turnovers," Mullins added.

Sophomore running back **R.J. Vanhook** (Prescott, Ark.), who gained 68 yards on 17 carries and caught one pass for 47 yards, which was Tech's second-longest offensive play of the season, was named Tech's Governor's Classic Offensive MVP for the second consecutive season, while Jackson, who recorded eight tackles, 2.0 tackles for loss, one sack and one fumble recovery, was named Tech's Defensive Player of the Year. Meanwhile, Brown, who was 17-for-20 passing for 160 yards and three scores, was named UCA's MVP on offense and Cory Cangelosi was named the defensive MVP after recording six tackles and picking off two passes.

Mullins said that he expects UCA to go far in the playoffs this season.

"I expect UCA to advance deep into the playoffs this season," Mullins said.

With the win, UCA secured itself of an NCAA Playoff berth, only the second one in school history and at least a share of the GSC title, depending on the results of Saturday's West Georgia-Valdosta State game. A VSU win and UCA and the Blazers share the title, while a Blazer lost give UCA the outright GSC title.

Tech completes its season with a 7-3 overall record and a 6-3 mark in the GSC, while UCA improves to 9-2 overall and 8-1 in the GSC.

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