

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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WONDER BOYS RUNNING GAME ON DISPLAY DURING SATURDAY'S GREEN AND GOLD SPRING SCRIMMAGE

RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Football wrapped up its 13th practice of spring football here Saturday morning as it held its annual Green and Gold Game in front of nearly 500 spectators at Buerkle Field.

In Saturday's scrimmage, Tech's offense performed the way that Head Football Coach **Steve Mullins** expected considering the Wonder Boys played without its top quarterbacks due to injuries. Redshirt sophomore **Justin Ray** (Benton, Ark.) and sophomore Arkansas transfer **Cole Barthel** (Decatur, Ala.) sat out almost the entire spring due to injuries.

"I thought we executed well at time offensively, especially since we had two receivers playing quarterback," Mullins said. "In addition, I thought our running game executed very well."

The Green and Gold Scrimmage featured the Green team (No. 1s) going up against the White team, which consisted of the rest of the team, in a four-quarter game. Both teams accounted for 406 yards of total offense and 34 points, including the White team amassing 229 yards of offense and three touchdowns.

"The green team came in to the game as the favorite, but it turned out to be a pretty evenly matched contest," Mullins said.

During the spring, Tech has introduced a new offensive scheme that features a no-huddle, one-back attack that spreads the field and uses the athleticism of its quarterbacks, but that offensive scheme has been hindered due to absence of its top two signal callers.

Sophomore running back **Antonio McCoy** (Batesville, Ark.) got the scoring started with a 30-yard run in the first quarter to give the White team a 7-0 lead as the extra point by sophomore **Travis Cockerham** (Bryant, Ark.) was good.

In the second quarter, sophomore defensive back **Delvin Ellis** (Memphis, Tenn.) got the Green team on the scoreboard as he returned a fumble three yards for a touchdown and then Cockerham tied the game with the extra point. Junior running back **R.J. Vanhook** (Prescott, Ark.), one of the Wonder Boys three returning offensive starters, scored on a two-yard run, but Cockerham's extra point was missed wide right to give the Green team a 13-7 lead. Junior wide receiver **Joe Stueart** (Prescott, Ark.) caught a 30-yard pass from redshirt freshman **Bubba Noakes** (Ola, Ark.) on the final play to give the Whites a 14-13 halftime lead.

"Antonio McCoy stood out today offensively," Mullins said. "He ran the ball well and didn't have any fumbles and played solid."

McCoy finished the scrimmage with a game-high 74 yards rushing on seven carries, with 51 yards of those yards coming on the White team.

Mullins said that McCoy's emergence this spring will allow the Wonder Boys to move redshirt sophomore **Tracey Stiger** (Russellville, Ark.) around at various positions. Stiger, who finished ranked eighth nationally in punt returns last season, gained 18 yards on the ground for the Green team in Saturday's scrimmage and returned three punts for 47 yards.

"Tracey is an elusive return man, because he is so hard to get a lick on," the coach said.

After neither team scored the third quarter, the White team sealed its win as redshirt freshman **Tim Childress** (Batesville, Ark.) scored on a one-yard run with 37 seconds remaining in the game to give the White team a 21-13 victory. Childress touchdown was set up by his 30-yard run and a 28-yard scamper up the middle by Noakes.

While Tech's running game amassed 218 yards on the ground, the passing game struggled as Noakes and redshirt freshman **C.J. Hunter** (West Helena, Ark.), the Green team's starting quarterback, combined to go 8-for-28 through the air for 88 yards and one touchdown and an interception. Noakes was 4-for-10 passing for 51 yards and had a touchdown pass, while Hunter was 4-for-18 through the air for 37 yards and had the lone interception, which was returned 32 yards by senior defensive back **LaMarcus Irvin** (Dallas, Texas) in the first quarter.

"I really appreciate Bubba and C.J.'s effort this spring stepping in and playing quarterback," Mullins said. "They have sacrificed a lot at their other position to take help us out."

Mullins said that he was impressed with the way Noakes performed on the White team.

"Bubba put on a show out there today," said Mullins, who is entering his 10th season at the helm of the Wonder Boys in the fall. "Not only did he run well and help lead the White team's offense, but he put out some licks on people today."

Though he did not comment specifically about his team's defense in the scrimmage, Mullins did comment that they had several big hits on Saturday.

"Our defense did provide some highlight reel hits," Mullins said.

The Wonder Boys will return to practice with a non-pad workout on Monday, before completing spring drills with the Senior Bowl on Tuesday night. Kickoff for the Senior Bowl is officially set for 6 p.m. at Buerkle Field.

"The Senior Bowl will provide one final opportunity for the players to come out and compete as a lot of positions remain open this upcoming season," said Mullins. Tech is looking to replace seven starters on defense and eight starters on offense from last season.

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