

REBEL SPORTS

Rebels looking for balanced offense in '88

by mike barclay

sports writer

The good news is Elbert "Ickey" Woods, last year's NCAA leading rusher, is running better than ever. The bad news is that he's running for the Cincinnati Bengals in the NFL.

So how will UNLV's offense avoid getting lost in the "Woods"?

Coach Wayne Nunnely, along with new offensive coordinator, Rod Bell, are faced with the dilemma of filling Woods' large shoes. They will attempt to do so by using various running backs and a balanced offensive attack.

"Our initial thoughts," Nunnely said. "Were to throw the ball out of a one-back set and spread people out with different formations, but this year our philosophy will be to run the football out of a two-back set."

Nunnely stated that the Rebels would use their many running backs and powerful offensive line to establish a

good running game, then follow by throwing occasionally to provide the balance needed to create a championship team.

Both Nunnely and Bell stressed the importance to be balanced offensively.

"We want to try to have balance in our offense," Nunnely explained. "Most people don't realize that when we had Randall Cunningham, we weren't a passing team, we were more of a run team that had a balanced passing attack."

The Rebels have three returning backs, including last year's part-time starter Tommy Jackson Jr., who backed-up Woods with 437 yards on 88 attempts last season.

Jackson is described by Bell as "a very capable, physical runner who is typical of our type of running back."

Also returning is finesse runner Bernard Jackson who will challenge Tommy Jackson for the starting Tailback position.

Returning letterman Darin

Brightmon and Howard Howell, a transfer from L.A. Valley Community College, will compete for the halfback position along with junior college transfer Kyle Toomer (JR).

These players give UNLV a varying set of runners to replace Woods' yards of last season.

To provide a passing option, Nunnely has last year's part-time starting quarterback slated to start for the Rebs this season.

Sophomore Scott Sims passed for 809 yards in 10 games last year. He should become more consistent this year with a more permanent starting position.

Nunnely installed Sims as this years number one quarterback following injuries to last year's other part-time starter Richard Williams. Sims also had a great Spring and according to Nunnely is well-deserving of the starting position.

Sims will throw to last year's starting wide receiver Mike Reddick, fifth-year senior Jamie Williams, and

second year Rebel Keenan McCardell.

With the loss of George Thomas to Atlanta of the NFL, and Ondra Guidry to injury these players will help to provide UNLV with a good passing attack for that much needed balance.

The basis for establishing solid running and passing games is the development of a strong offensive line. Both coaches were very optimistic regarding this year's offensive live.

"The offensive line will be the strength of the offensive," Nunnely said. "We have four of six starters returning (including tight end Cedric Davis) who blocked for the leading rusher in the nation last year."

The line is composed of returnees Dustin Quinton, Patrick Harden and Bill Operin, along with two players who had playing experience last year, Tony Peko and George Ruggles.

Operin and Harden were both second team all conference selections last season.

Cedric Davis, who Nunnely calls "the best tight end we've ever had at UNLV," was an honorable mention all Big West player last season.

Davis rounds out what coaches expect to be a very good offensive line.

The Rebels are not without stars so to speak. They have two players of national acclaim who are very important to the UNLV football program. They are kickers Jim Cook and Tony Rhynes.

These two kickers give UNLV one of the best kicking tandems in the nation.

Placekicker Jim Cook was second in the Big West in scoring last season converting 27-27 extra points and 15-17 field goals.

Cook, a senior, gives the Rebels an offensive weapon anytime they get within the 40-yard line.

Punter Tony Rhynes, was an honorable mention All-American last year with a 43.7 yard per punt average. This average was good enough to make Rhynes eighth in the nation in punting.

"Tony will be a real weapon for us in keeping opposing offenses inside the 30-yard line," says Nunnely.

Nunnely expects an even better year from Rhynes this year and if he continues to kick the ball as well in 1988 he will certainly be a very valuable player for UNLV.

The main concern for the Rebels this year will be their lack of depth. They are not strong in the offensive line past the starters and lose quite a bit of size and strength.

Injuries could be the key to the Rebels' chances this season. With two games at Nebraska and Baylor (two notoriously hard-hitting defensive teams) this concern over injuries has a very strong foundation.

So while Ickey Woods runs around for Cincinnati his former team will try to run a little themselves and try to balance the Rebels to a successful season.

McDade returns to Rebels

by andrea luce

sports writer

Who says you can't come home again?

Michael McDade, returning to UNLV from the Cleveland Browns, has recently been named Assistant Coach of Wide Receivers by Head Football Coach Wayne Nunnely.

McDade has had quite a career since being drafted by the Arizona Outlaws of the USFL in 1985 following two years at UNLV.

From Arizona McDade went on to play for the USFL's Cleveland Bruisers and then finally to the Cleveland Browns of the NFL.

An injury while playing for the Browns has temporarily put his career on hold. He decided to come back to Las Vegas for relaxation and doctor's care.

When Coach Nunnely called and offered him a tem-

porary coaching position McDade jumped at the idea.

"This gives me an opportunity to see football from a coaches point of view", McDade said.

Even though he will not play football for the Browns until next season McDade believes coaching, in a different respect, will prove to be just as beneficial.

Along with learning from the other coaches McDade says, "I'm learning from them (the athletes) and they're learning from me."

McDade strongly believes in academics, giving 100% and most of all self-discipline on and off the field. His idea of a good wide receiver is "one with not only raw talent, but with more strategical ability."

McDade feels he can, "offer the wide receivers the knowlegde on certain coverages and how to read coverages."

He is impressed with the

crop of talent that he has to work with.

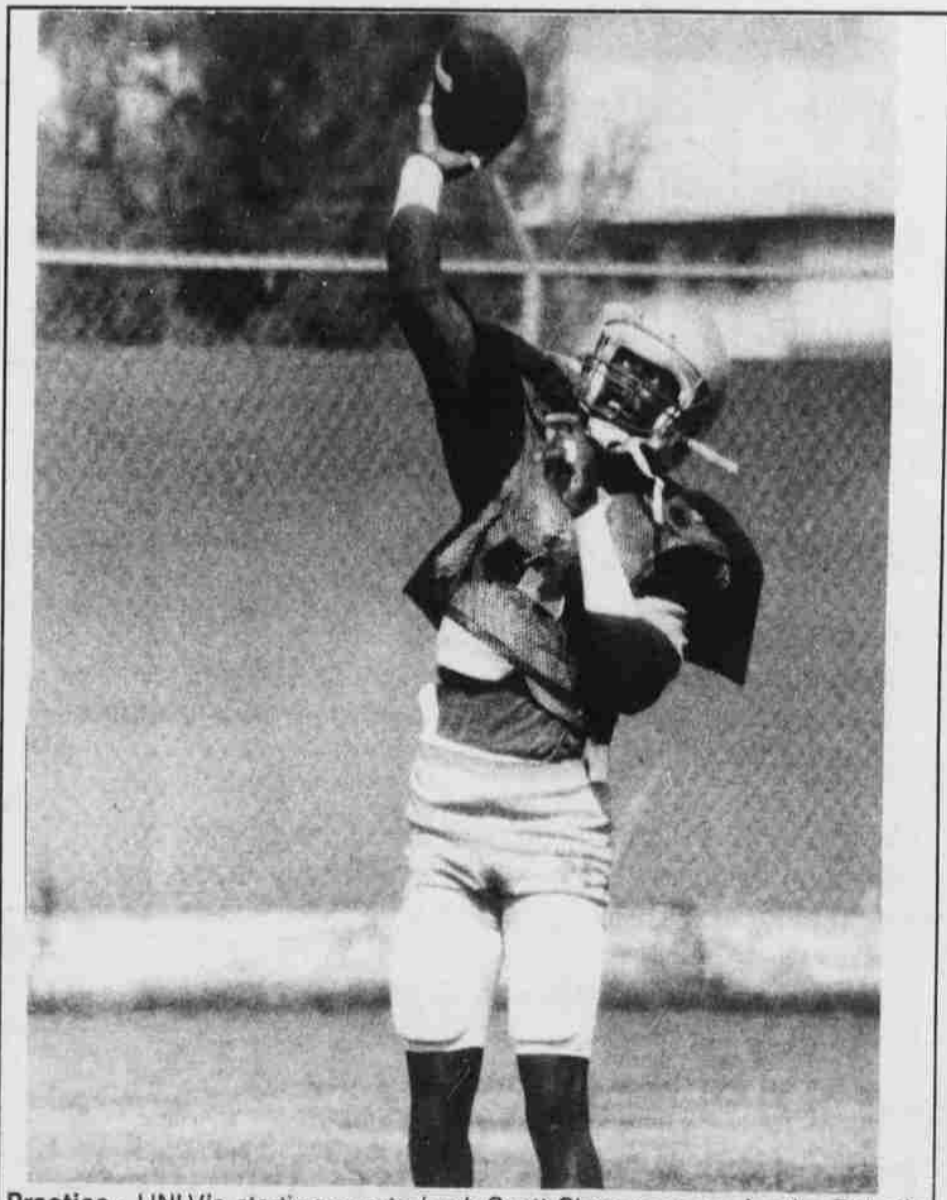
"This years wide receivers are talented and competitive," McDade said.

Having played with some of these same Rebel players in 1983-84 could prove to be uncomfortable at times for McDade. But he feels that the players have nothing but respect for him as a coach and have a great willingness to learn from the knowledge he has to offer them.

McDade has quite a task ahead of him, along with coaching he will be attending classes in the fall semester. He has only one more year of school left before earning his degree in criminal justice.

But for now he is putting all his energy into the first game of the season at Baylor on September 4.

"Baylor is a good team," McDade said. "If we go out there and play up to our potential, we'll win the game."



Practice - UNLV's starting quarterback Scott Sims prepares for the Rebel's opener at Baylor September fourth.

Photo by steve spatatore