**SEARCH FOR CONSISTENCY**

**Rebuilding the offensive line and finding consistency in the red zone are two of many tasks for offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring this spring**

By Jimmy Robertson

**Q: Looking back at last year, what are some of the things you did well and some of the things you hope to improve upon this spring?**

**BS:** “When I looked back at last year, we moved the ball very well. We were productive. We had a lot of people touch the ball. I liked the way we moved the ball. We were third in the conference in total offense (413 ypg), second in first downs (21.1 fdpg), second in rushing (186.9 ypg), second in third downs (45.9 percent), things like that. We moved the ball. You go back and look at games like Miami, Georgia Tech and Wake Forest and other ACC games; we were able to help control the game. We made some big plays at the beginning of games, and we made some big plays at crunch time. So I thought we played well for the majority of the season.

“But there was some inconsistency that we didn’t have in the past. That’s worn on me a little bit. We could score on the first play, and we could drive it 90 yards. But then there were some times when we were up and down the field and didn’t have the points to show for it. Duke was an example of that. So there’s a consistency we’ve got to get to. We left a lot of points on the field, and that doesn’t show how well we played.

“We went back and looked at the red zone – actually, we extended it back to the 30 – if you just look at self-inflicted mistakes, we left between 60 and 80 points on the field. That’s just between turnovers and penalties. We left a lot of points on the field, more so than I can ever remember. It got us in the end [in the Sugar Bowl]. We had three drives, and they didn’t stop us – and we only had six points to show for it.”

**Q: As an offensive staff, how much time this offseason did you guys spend on your schemes both in looking at what you did last year and what you plan on doing this year?**

**BS:** “We did the most comprehensive self-study that we’ve ever done. It was a comprehensive look at everything – the red zone, every down and distance, every situation, what we called, what was the result, the percentages … just to get a bead because that wore on me more than anything. Opportunities are hard to come by. When you miss as many as I think we did, you have to go back and look at the whole body of work. That’s what we did.

“We found out that we had too many turnovers in the red zone, and our penalties were critical penalties. That was the biggest thing. We had too many self-inflicted mistakes. There were some execution things, and a couple of calls. There are other things that come into it, but ultimately we looked at what we needed to do and how we need to be more consistent. That’s the biggest thing. Finishing drives is a big part of our offseason.”

**Q: What areas are you looking at closely from a personnel standpoint?**

**BS:** “I’m not going to skirt the issue here. This is one of the more serious undertakings we’ve had to go through from a personnel standpoint. In the spring, it usually revolves around replacing guys who aren’t coming back – that’s always a part of it – but then you’ve got some guys out this spring because of injuries, like Michael Via and D.J. Coles. So it’s a significant undertaking this spring.

“Our offensive line, in general, is going to be a focal point. It’s not these four guys or these five guys. It’s whoever has ‘OL’ attached to him. Every single one of them. It’s not like one guy is going to be the focus of our attention. It’s the whole group. There is an extreme sense of urgency up front.

“Obviously, we’re looking at the production areas. Losing guys like Danny [Coale] and Jarrett [Boykin], that’s a lot of production at one spot. Losing David Wilson, that’s a lot of production. So who is going to step up and be the producers? That’s a focal point. Marcus Davis has to play well this spring, and Dyrell [Roberts], we need to get him back and going full speed and get him back in the rhythm of playing. But those two guys aren’t any more or any less significant than Demitri Knowles or Kevin Asante or [Christian] Reeves or [Corey] Fuller. They’re all in the same category.

“Then, we’ll look at the tailback spot. We’ve had the opportunity to see Michael Holmes, and we feel good about him. We know what J.C. Coleman is all about. But those guys have to carry the load this spring and be prepared and ready to go in the fall.”

**Q: On the offensive line, will you juggle guys around to find the best fit?**

**BS:** “We’d like to get it stationary because we feel that’s important. What’s got to happen is we’ve got to have a group that understands their position as well as they can possibly understand the nuances of the position. But then they’ve got to know how to work within the group and have the cohesion to work together so that we can have some success. To expedite that process, the more we can keep people locked in at one position, the better off we’ll be.

“The only guy this spring that would be in more than one area would be Caleb Farris. Now, if Michael Via were here, he’d be an additional guy. He’s done it. So now, it’s really only going to revolve around Caleb because we liked what we saw of him last year. So we’ve got to determine where he fits in.

“Now, is all this etched in stone? No, but as of right now, we’re locked in, and we want to teach the techniques and fundamentals at each individual position and build cohesion. To do that, we feel this is the best way to go about doing that.”

**Q: What’s going to happen at the tight end spot, with Chris Drager having graduated?**

**BS:** “I like the spot. I like the potential, and I like the diversity of the group. Obviously, Ryan Malleck figures in to compete for the starting job. Randall Dunn gives us the ability to be in a four-receiver set, with only three receivers out there, if that makes sense. He gives you the ability to be in three-wides and four-wides, even with a tight end in the game. I think he can give you a dimension at tight end and also be an additional receiver, too.

“Eric Martin has been battling some injuries for a while, and we need to get him healthy and get him going. He’s been good in some of the things we’ve asked him to do, and George [George] has played a lot of snaps. Then, we’ve got Darius Redman, who has shown flashes and is a youthful guy. [Duan] Perez-Means is moving over, and I like his length. I really like what we have at the position.”

**Q: What do you anticipate from Michael Holmes and J.C. Coleman at the tailback spot this spring?**

**BS:** “I feel there’s a confidence in Mike. He’s got a great deal to learn, but the situations we put him in toward the end of fall, going into bowl practices and then the bowl practices themselves and scrimmage work that he got, you like what you saw. We like the way he ran with the ball in his hands. He’s got a great feel for running the ball, and he has some strength. There’s a confidence in him because of what we’ve seen.

“We know what J.C. is capable of. We know the burst that he has, and the skill set that he has. Now getting him to play to that speed and learning the offense and recognizing the offense, there’s just a lot he has to learn to be able to play, and for us to get a good evaluation of what he can do. He’s driven and wants to do well. With the mindset he has, he’s going to do everything he can to get himself ready to go.”

**Q: With some of these question marks or concerns, are your expectations of Logan Thomas going to be any different?**

**BS:** “Absolutely not. The biggest thing we want to see from Logan is to continue to work on recognizing things faster. You do that by more and more reps, and he did that throughout the year. We just want to keep building on that. We also want to be sound in the techniques of being a quarterback. He’s still getting that part of it.

“He’s going to have to show a little patience this spring, too, as people did with him last fall. The biggest thing I expect out of Logan is for him to come out and lead us.”

**Q: Is depth at quarterback a concern?**

**BS:** “As [former Tech quarterback coach] Kevin Rogers used to say, you always want three guys out there capable of playing. But we’ve got a lot of confidence in Mark Leal. He’s gone into games and shown a lot of poise and composure out there when he’s played. Obviously, he’s not been out there in a crunch situation, but when he’s been out there, he’s done well. He’s got a lot of confidence, and we’re confident in him.”

**Q: Who are some other guys whom you’re going to be looking at closely throughout the spring?**

**BS:** “I think Demitri Knowles and Kevin Asante are two guys you have to watch. We have to see how they go, along with guys like Corey Fuller, E.L. Smiling and Christian Reeves. If you come out in four wide, one or two of those guys are in the mix. I’m going to be watching a lot of guys, but those are the ones I’m really going to be watching closely, and to be honest, I’m excited about what they bring to the table.”

**Q: What do you hope to have accomplished by the end of spring practice?**

**BS:** “To feel like we’ve gotten better. I know that’s ‘coach-speak,’ but I want to see improvement across the board. I want this group, individually and collectively, to improve, and to see that they’ve gained some confidence in each other and themselves. I want to see them establish a mindset that they need to improve in the offseason and in August. We want to establish that we’re moving in a certain direction. We want to have improved, but we also understand that we have miles to go. We’ve got a lot of work to be done. But if we can make a significant gain on that toward getting to where we need to be, then we’ve accomplished a lot this spring. It’s not going to be an overnight process. It’s going to be an ongoing process, but they need to understand there is a big-time urgency.”