

Bowling Green

Head coach Dave Clawson (Williams College)



In just his second season at the helm of the Bowling Green football program, head coach Dave Clawson has a radical reconstruction project underway. After his Falcons put up eye-popping numbers through the air in 2009, led by quarterback Tyler Sheehan and standout receiver Freddie Barnes, the BG offense will have a much different flavor in 2010.

The shootout days at Doyt Perry Stadium have come to an end, and the bulk of the offense will now fall on the undersized shoulders of 5-foot-8, 176 pound senior running back Willie Geter. Though Geter may be small in stature, his presence was felt by MAC defenses all season in 2009.

In an offense that featured the second-ranked receiver in the nation, Barnes (NCAA record 155 receptions, 1,770 receiving yards, 19 touchdowns) and the third-rated quarterback in the country, Sheehan (373-575 for 4,051 yards with 27 touchdowns and just seven interceptions) Geter was able to leave his mark.

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He rushed for 705 yards on 176 carries (4.0 average) and nine touchdowns to finish eighth in the conference in rushing. He capped his stellar season with 14 carries for 96 yards and two touchdowns in the Falcons' loss to Idaho in the Humanitarian Bowl.

Clawson realizes Geter will have to carry the mail for the Bowling Green offense this season, especially with his eventual starting quarterback, expected to be freshman Matt Schliz (ranked the fifth-highest quarterback recruit in the nation not going to a non-BCS school), getting on-the-job training.

"You're not going to take a freshman quarterback, stick him and say 'do what Tyler did.' Tyler was a three-year starter and last year had his best year," Clawson said. "We can't put that type of burden on our quarterback this year; we're going to have to put more of it on Willie, we're going to have to run the football better and we're going to have to become a more physical team up front.

"If we can get a quarterback to play mistake-free football and not turn the football over I think we have enough talent at running back, wide receiver and on the o-line that we can still be a productive offense this year," Clawson added.

Even with the loss of Barnes, who is trying to make his way onto the Chicago Bears roster this season after his record-breaking career at BG, Clawson thinks people might be overlooking what he expects to be a solid receiving corps. Tyrone Pronty, who was injured in the season opener against Troy last season, and Calvin Wiley are both healthy and ready to go. They will be joined by juniors Adrian Hodges and Ray Hutson, who caught 46 and 28 passes respectively in '09.

"People talk about losing Freddie, but what gets overlooked is that we lost Calvin Wiley last year and Tyrone Pronty to injuries and those two were going to have great years for us," Clawson said. "To get those two back at wideout is a huge boost to our program."

Youth will be served up front on the Falcons' offensive line as well. Senior Tyler Donahue (6-6, 298 from Naperville, Ill.) is the most experienced in the unit, having seen action in 35 career games with 13 starts under his belt. He will be expected to hold down one of the tackle slots. Ben Bojicic (6-4, 295 from Farmington Hills, Mich.) started 10 games last season and is on the

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preseason Remington Award watch list. Scott Lewis (6-2, 304 from Sylvania, Ohio) and Blaec Walker (6-5, 308 from Middletown, Ohio) each have two career starts as well.

A number of freshmen will battle for playing time up front as well as Clawson had a strong recruiting class at linemen. Dominic Flewellyn (6-3, 300 from Maple Heights, Ohio) was named first-team All-Ohio by the Associated Press, as was Isaiah Byler (6-4, 270 from Elyria). Byler was also ranked as the No. 76 offensive guard recruit in the nation by ESPN.com.

“We’re young but we’re talented,” Clawson said. “One of the reasons we were able to recruit two good recruiting classes back to back in that these guys knew they were going to have an opportunity to play early. Now that opportunity is here and we have enough good veterans with enough good leadership...the older guys will have to show the younger guys how it’s done. It’s on them to make sure things are done the right way.”

Geter is looking forward to playing a larger role in the offense.

“It’s something new for me because I’ve been in the role of a role player,” he said. “Stepping up to be a leader is something new for me, and I embrace it because I’ve been here for three, going on four years and I know what it takes to win. I have a lot of experience and I think I can lead the new players into a winning season.”

Last season Bowling Green was able to make up for a spotty defense with its explosive offense. This season’s Falcons will not have that luxury, which is why the young BG defense will have to grow up in a hurry.

The Falcons lost their top four tacklers from last season to graduation, with junior defensive back Keith Morgan, with 68 stops, atop the list of returning tacklers. Senior linebacker Eugene Fells had 44 tackles and a sack last season and has been voted the Falcons’ defensive captain. He knows he will have to provide a solid example for his young teammates on defense.

“I’m going on my fifth year now so I’m definitely looking forward to pulling the freshmen along to hopefully lead them to a MAC championship,” Fells said. “At the end of the day we have to step

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up and show them what's going on because they haven't been through it."

Clawson knows full well his young defense will have a very sharp learning curve...and that it will begin with attitude.

"One of the most critical things will be how much better we get up front on defense. I expect our greatest strides to come from our front seven on defense," Clawson said. "Last year we did not defend the run very well and, I think, at times we got pushed around. I expect us to be a much more stout, physical defensive football team."

The Falcons have a brutal schedule, one of the toughest in the conference, opening with three difficult road games in their first four weeks...at Troy on Sept. 4, at Tulsa Sept. 11 and at Michigan on Sept. 25. BG must also travel to Ohio, Temple, Central Michigan and Toledo in conference play.

"Last year what stood out was the resiliency of our football team," Clawson said of 2009's 7-6 Humanitarian Bowl team. "When we were 1-4 after a tough loss to Ohio we were in that locker room and the football team had a decision to make. We had to decide if we were going to give up on the season or if we were going to work and get better. And it ended up being a real rewarding season because of the decision that football team made. I think that's the greatest lesson this year's team needs to take from last year's team.

"Youth is no excuse to not have a successful football team this year," he added.