

With Hampton vs. Delaware State, Conference Slate in Full Swing

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The non-conference schedule is over and conference play begins in earnest when Hampton travels to Dover, Delaware in a meeting of the last two MEAC champions. The Pirates (3-1, 2-0 MEAC) enter the contest following a bye week, while Delaware State (1-2, 1-0) hopes to rebound after a 28-10 loss to Central Connecticut. The winner will claim at least a share of the early season conference lead.

Hampton followed its only loss, by six points to Southern Illinois, with back-to-back MEAC wins against Howard and North Carolina A&T. The Pirates, second in the conference in points scored, passing and total offense, are led by sophomore QB Herbert Bynes (74-of-122, 960- yards, 7 TDs and 5 ints.) The first-year starter is completing 60% of his passes under new head coach Jerry Holmes and his newly installed spread offensive system. Bynes' three favorite receiving targets are among the best in the country at the position: seniors Kevin Teel (23 catches, 241 yards, TD), Justin Brown (16-378-5) and Jeremy Gilchrist (15-166-1). University of Tennessee transfer LaMarcus Coker is the team's leading rusher with 254 yards and a touchdown on 53 carries (4.8 ypc). Redshirt freshman Dennis Mathis (40-133), sophomore Gerard Griffin (10-53-1) and senior Jerry Cummings (3 TDs) have also shared time in the Pirates' backfield.

Senior LB Wakeem Goode, the conference's second-leading tackler with 39 and two sacks, leads the Pirates defensively. Other key defenders include sophomore safety Jonathan Wade (33 tackles), junior LB Michael Swett (22 tackles, 1.5 sacks) and sophomore DB Jackie Bates (21 tackles). Junior DE Chris Baker leads the MEAC with 3.5 sacks and DB Rasoul Wilson has two interceptions. On special teams punter Jahmal Blanchard leads the conference with a 45.2-yard average while Teel has returned two kicks for scores; Gilchrist also has two punt returns for touchdowns.

Delaware State has struggled to move the ball at times in September, but still boasts plenty of weapons. Senior QB Vashon Winton ranks fourth in the conference, completing 59.7% of his passes, but for just 388 yards, a touchdown and four interceptions. Ten players have caught at least one pass for Winton, led by senior Derrick McNeil (13-87), junior Larine Moore (9-109), senior RB Chris Strother (9-61) and senior Eddie Brown (7-101-1). Strother is the Hornets' leading rusher with 246 yards on 52 carries, but is still seeking his first touchdown of the season. Winton, however, has more than picked up the slack, rushing for five scores to go with his 164 yards on 17 carries (6.1 ypc). Both Strother and Winton rank among the league's ten best rushers.

Delaware State is led defensively by senior LB Kevin Connor (the fourth-leading tackler in the conference with 8.7 per game. Other key defenders include senior DE Akiel Russell (18 tackles), senior LB Jackie Watkins (17 tackles) and senior DB James Romain (16 tackles, int.). As a team the Hornets have intercepted just five passes and have only one sack of an opposing quarterback.