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Breaking down "Seminole"
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Golden Eagles to watch
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A College Heights Herald special section
Southern Mississippi doesn't have the same kind of name recognition as WKU's last two opponents, Alabama and Kentucky, but that doesn't mean the Toppers are taking the Golden Eagles lightly, junior linebacker Xavius Boyd said.

WKU is preparing for the defending Conference-USA champions with the same focus as it had before facing the two SEC schools, Boyd said.

"We try and take the same approach every week, as far as what team we play," Boyd said. "We don't look at any team different. You never know what happens — there's a lot of upsets that go on now days."

The Toppers will face USM at 6 p.m. Saturday at Smith Stadium.

Boyd knows something about upsets. The Toppers are coming off of one of the biggest wins in school history, a 32-31 overtime win over Kentucky.

Boyd led underdog WKU in tackles that night with 10 and is the team leader in tackles this season so far with 23.

He said he expects the team to step up against the Golden Eagles like they did against the Wildcats.

"It's not the first big game we've won," Boyd said. "It's one of the biggest games we've won, but we're still going to come out here and put the work in for the next game."

WKU improved to 2-1 with the win over Kentucky, the first time they've gotten off to a winning start through three games since 2007.

The Toppers started 3-1 that season, and junior defensive back Brett Harrington said the Toppers understand starting this season with another win could be crucial to their potential bowl hopes later this year.

"It's just a respect thing," he said. "Nobody's going to give us anything anymore. They know Western Kentucky is coming up, so it's just better for us to go 3-1 than 2-2."

The Golden Eagles are the last non-conference opponent on WKU's schedule and the Toppers might not face another team quite like them this season.

USM, famous for being alma mater of NFL MVP quarterback Brett Favre, is still working on its current quarterback situation.

Junior Chris Campbell, a more conventional in-the-pocket quarterback, got the start for the Golden Eagles in their season-opener while freshman Anthony Alford, who is more prone to run the ball, started the next game. Both saw time in each of USM's first two games.

"One guy runs the ball, and the other one doesn't," Willie Taggart said, summing it up on Monday. "It is what it is, and our guys have got to do a great job of watching film and studying their opponents and understanding what they're doing when certain guys are in the game."

The Toppers recorded four interceptions last Saturday in their big win.

Despite the magnitude of the Kentucky win, Taggart said he doesn't expect his team to lose focus as they prepare for USM.

"There's still a long ways to go," he said. "We've got nine ballgames left. This is a huge one for us. It's been huge from day one."

A 3-1 start to begin conference play would be ideal for the Toppers, and Taggart said he thinks his team can pull it off.

"We still want to see how good we can be — we haven't shown that yet," he said. "Last week wasn't our best ballgame... That's good to be in that situation right now."
The WKU Floral Design Training Center and Floral Shop would like to Congratulate the Hilltoppers on a great win against UK. Good Luck against Southern Miss!

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CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE TALISMAN

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The 2012 Talisman comes in next week, so don't forget to pick up your book from Student Publications Center!
Several big plays vaulted WKU to an overtime win against Kentucky, but it was the winning two-point conversion that stands out as the moment of the game.

But it's a moment that almost didn't happen.

“Alabama ran the same play and scored against Louisiana-Monroe early in their game (which took place hours before the WKU-UK game),” coach Willie Taggart said. “I was a little hesitant then because I was like, ‘Geez, they ran it before us — now everyone’s going to see it.”

The call for the trick play, which the team deemed “Seminole,” surprised senior quarterback Kawaun Jakes, who said the play didn’t even exist until the days leading up to the game.

“We only prepared it in the last few days of practice,” Jakes said. “I really didn’t think we were going to call it, but we just executed when coach did.”

It’s not an easy play to break down.

Down one point after just scoring a touchdown, Jakes lined up directly behind junior center Sean Conway on the left side of the field, with junior running back Antonio Andrews to his right.

He took the snap at the three-yard line and immediately tossed it to Andrews about five yards behind him.

Andrews, a quarterback in high school, had two players, senior tight end Jack Doyle and senior wide receiver Marcus Vasquez, block for him as he held the ball.

He took a step forward and jumped back before throwing a lob back to Jakes, who had been left wide open after he got rid of the ball.

It was a leap of faith by Jakes to let another player throw the winning pass, but the quarterback said he would have been confident in anyone on the team in a moment that big.

“If (senior guard) Adam Smith was throwing it, I’d have confidence in him making it,” Jakes said. “The game was on the line, he had to make something happen and he did.”

It took a lot of luck for the ball to get back to Jakes. Andrews cleared two Wildcat linemen between him and Jakes, both of which had a good shot to tip or block the throw.

Andrews said he had bigger concerns than the rushing Kentucky defenders.

“I wasn't worried about them knocking it down, I just didn't want to overthrow him,” he said.

“I wound up under-throwing him and gave the d-line a chance to tip the ball, but hey, fate was with us, and it got the ball to him.”

Jakes’ catch was just as lucky.

As the ball spiraled to the ground, the quarterback leaned forward and reached down just in time to make the catch.

Blocks by Smith and junior guard Luis Polanco helped Jakes run into the end zone untouched.

Doyle, who was busy blocking for Andrews, said he only saw the end of the play and couldn't help but get caught up in the moment.

“I could see in my peripherals Antonio throw it back, and then I kind of stopped and looked — I probably should have still been blocking but I was a little excited.”

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Coming into the season, coach Willie Taggart and the Toppers preached a “running back by committee,” where several backs share carries for the team over the course of the game.

Junior Antonio Andrews has earned his spot as the committee chairman. Andrews has led the Toppers in all-purpose yards in every game this season and with a prominent place in the WKU offense, he doesn’t show any signs of slowing down.

His all-purpose yard totals are a product of his place in the Topper playbook. Andrews does it all for WKU — he leads the team in rushing attempts and kick returns and is a close second in receptions.

Andrews said he embraces his role as a renaissance man in the Topper offense. “If you’re playing in this offense as a running back, you’ve got to be able to catch, block and run the ball,” he said. “Me being able to catch the ball just allows me to be that much more of a dynamic player.”

His efforts on the field have not gone unnoticed. Andrews was named the Sun Belt Conference Offensive Player of the Week last week for his performance against Kentucky.

Andrews racked up 125 yards and three touchdowns on 34 carries against the Wildcats. He also had three catches for 36 yards and 72 yards on three kick or punt returns.

Freshman Leon Allen also saw time at running back against Kentucky, gaining 20 yards on six carries.

Taggart said he can see Andrews beginning to gather some buzz from other teams.

“Antonio Andrews is starting to make people know his name,” Taggart said. “We want everybody to know our name.”

Taggart and the coaching staff didn’t intend for Andrews to play the primary role in the offense. But when junior running back Keshawn Simpson injured his knee in the season-opener against Austin Peay, they were forced to let him have an expanded role.

Simpson came into the season as WKU’s starting running back and had gained 60 yards on the ground before getting injured on opening night.

Andrews said Simpson left a noticeable hole in the running back rotation, which has consisted almost entirely of him and Allen in the past two games. “Having that one-two-three punch is solid but now we’re down to a one-two,” Andrews said. “We’re just looking for that third running back to step up.”

Southern Mississippi, WKU’s opponent this weekend, uses a 4-2-5 defense, that places an emphasis on stopping the run.

Andrews said he’s ready for the challenge. “Whatever the o-line gives me, I’m taking it,” he said. “If they come out here and they’re making holes for me, I’m going to hit them.”
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The 1992 squad in 1992 said we want to play and defeat and leave, or fight to stay. The vote to do away with Topper football right there would have been no football," he said. "It was kind of spinning along." He found out the university planned mandated $6.1 million budget reduction. There would be a cut at halftime of WKU’s game on Saturday vs. Southern Mississippi to pay tribute to the season that will be honored on Saturday, former coach Jack Harbaugh said. "We were hungry for revenge," Maslowski said. "It was metal on metal. It was a team effort. I had for breakfast yesterday, but I can take you through that drive," former coach Jack Harbaugh said. "I can’t remember what I had for breakfast yesterday, but I can take you through the drive because of the impact I had on that championship season."

"That was 10 years ago, and I can almost remember every play that you play that we called, the yard that we gained, who caught what—I can take you through that drive," former coach Jack Harbaugh said. "I can’t remember what I had for breakfast yesterday, but I can take you through the drive because of the impact I had on that championship season."

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Les Forsythe is the man tasked with overseeing the facility operations in WKU’s Diddle Arena. The Owensboro native also assists with operations at Smith Stadium. Forsythe started work at WKU as a graduate assistant in the fall of 2005 and became full-time in May of 2007.

Q: What do you do on a day-to-day basis?

Day-to-day basis is overseeing all the facility operations in Diddle Arena, which, you know, not only do we have our game basketball court and then the two practice gyms, but we’ve also got our weight room. For sports, it’s men and women’s basketball, volleyball, swimming, golf, most of the athletic administration offices are in this building. It’s taking care of our student athletes’ locker rooms and also the offices that are in the building as well.

Q: How did you get into this position?

I came here for graduate school and was able to work in this office as a graduate assistant whenever I was taking grad classes. Right before I graduated from graduate school, a position opened up in here, and I was fortunate to apply and get the position when it became vacant.

Q: How do WKU’s facilities stack up with other schools in the Sun Belt Conference?

We’re always going to pride ourselves on being the flagship institution in the Sun Belt Conference as it pertains to facilities.

We want to make sure our facilities are up to date and clean... We only open up for six home football games a year, so it gets a lot of people on this campus that don’t come on a day-to-day basis.

When they come into our facility, it needs to be state of the art, it needs to be clean, it needs to be kept up in order. That’s always a goal of ours — to be top of the line in the Sun Belt Conference when it comes to facilities.

- Tyler Lashbrook
Lady Toppers begin SBC title defense

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The Lady Toppers believe the season is broken into three parts: non-conference, conference and postseason. At this point, they've completed a third of it.

This weekend's home match-ups against Troy and South Alabama kick off part two of WKU's quest to win back-to-back Sun Belt Conference championships.

No. 24 WKU finished the "first part" of its season 14-3, with all three losses coming against other top 25 teams in the nation.

Now, every Sun Belt opponent will circle WKU on its schedule as a marquee conference game.

Junior defensive specialist Ashley Potts said it's not enough that the team has cracked the top 25 mark.

"There's no settling now," Potts said. "We have to continue to improve that ranking by coming in and working hard every day and not take any team for granted."

WKU finished its 2011 campaign No. 23 with a 31-4 record and a NCAA Tournament appearance. Unfortunately for the Lady Toppers their Tournament was cut short, as they were knocked out by Marquette in the first round.

The Lady Toppers finished 15-1 in Sun Belt competition last year, with their only loss coming from MTSU in Diddle Arena.

WKU redeemed itself however in the conference tournament, where they captured their Sun Belt title by defeating the Blue Raiders.

Currently, WKU is the only team from the Sun Belt in the top 25.

Friday night's opponent Troy is second in the Sun Belt East Division with an 8-6 overall record. North Texas leads the West at 13-5.

The Lady Toppers are clearly the better team on paper, something head coach Travis Hudson said his team "needs to embrace."

"The reality is we're the biggest match on everyone's schedules," Hudson said. "We've worked really hard to be where we are."

In Hudson's 18 years on the Hill, he has seen his share of ups and downs with WKU volleyball.

"I have an interesting perspective as a coach in that I've been on all sides of it," Hudson said. "I've had teams at the bottom. I've been on teams in the middle, and I've been on teams that were at the top."

"I promise I would rather be dealing with these issues than ones in the past."

The Lady Toppers will kick things off in Diddle Arena at 7 p.m. Friday against Troy, and at 1 p.m. Saturday against South Alabama.

Senior outside hitter Jordyn Skinner said targets sit squarely on WKU's backs.

"We did all we could to put ourselves at an at-large bid," Skinner said. "Now it's time to start focusing on conference play. It'll be fun to get started and see the end result."

WKU is hoping that the end result of part two in 2012 will be similar to part two in 2011.
Family atmosphere surrounds WKU volleyball

Most athletes spend more time with their teammates than any other group of people. Between practice and road games, student athletes make their teammates their new family.

In the case of WKU volleyball, the family roots run deep.

Starting from the top, Kelly Potts came to WKU in 2006 as a defensive specialist. Her little sister, Ashley Potts, is currently the Lady Toppers' junior defensive specialist. The two are the only siblings to ever play for coach Travis Hudson in the same year — 2010.

“Knowing that Kelly was here and loved it was my biggest influence in coming here,” Potts said. “I got to know Travis when I was 9 because she was going through the recruiting process.

“She would always talk to me about how great it was and I wanted to be just like her, so I came here.”

Ashley Potts and junior setter Melanie Stutsman have a friendship dating back to their toddler years. While their parents played in an adult volleyball league, Potts and Stutsman were always there together. Potts and Stutsman, along with senior Sarah Rogers, later played together for the Kentucky-Indiana Volleyball Academy (KIVA).

While Potts committed to WKU early as a sophomore at Louisville Sacred Heart Academy, Stutsman committed as a junior from Floyd Central (Indiana) High School.

“I was really excited just knowing that I would have someone to connect to,” Potts said. “We became roommates freshman year and we're still roommates today.”

Stutsman said it wasn’t only Potts who made her feel comfortable coming to WKU.

“I was new here, so she played a factor in it,” Stutsman said. “I also knew Sarah Rogers from the same club, Paige (Wessel) was from a competing club, so I knew a lot of people here.”

Also hailing from Floyd Central is freshman Rachel Engle, a teammate of Stutsman and Potts’ cousin.

Engle spent her high school years watching her cousins, Kelly and Ashley Potts, play in Diddle Arena and knew in her heart that she wanted to play for WKU.

Engle’s decision to come to WKU was much like Kelly Potts’ influence on Ashley.

“Ashley was always telling me how great it was and I knew Kelly had an awesome experience here,” Engle said. “It was just one of those things that kind of ran in the family, and I just wanted to keep it going.

“It was also a great opportunity to play ball with my cousin, something I’ve never gotten to do.”

The lineage of Lady Toppers doesn’t appear to be stopping with Engle.

Her little sister, Floyd Central junior Sydney Engle, has committed to join the Lady Toppers in 2014.

Players said the personal connections that run through the volleyball program make the team experience special.

“With Travis and (assistant coach) Kristi (Griffin), we can come to them with anything,” Engle said. “Even if it's not volleyball or school related, anything we want to talk about, they're there.”

Stutsman reiterated the team’s close ties.

“Western Kentucky volleyball isn’t just a program, we're a giant family,” Stutsman said. “We see each other as sisters.

“The way we act around each other is ridiculous. If people really saw how we were they would think we’re really weird. But that’s the way a family is. You can be your complete self around them and they’re going to love you no matter what.”
With Sun Belt Conference play starting Friday, the Lady Toppers are going into the first league game pleased with their season thus far.

The Lady Toppers' non-conference record is 5-3, but there's one thing unusual about the season so far.

There's been just one game in which the Lady Toppers haven't scored.

"It's outstanding," head coach Jason Neidell said. "Things turned out a little different than expected. We're better on the attacking side than we expected to be this season, so it's great."

The Lady Toppers are one of only two teams that have scored against Tennessee and Vanderbilt so far this season.

"It's really been a team effort," Neidell said. "We've been working in practice on being more creative offensively, and it hasn't been about focusing on just one player. Everyone contributes."

While things for the Lady Toppers have been going well, senior midfielder Courtney Rymer said the team still needs to focus on conference play.

"I'm really confident in the team, but going into conference play, the stakes are higher," she said. "So we do need to pick up our level of play." "I'm excited about how far we've come so far, and I'm excited to see how we progress over the rest of the season."

Despite the offensive success, Neidell said the team still has some work to do defensively.

Senior defender Ali Stahlke said the team's defense has improved throughout her years on the team.

Stahlke began playing defense at the end of her freshman year. As a sophomore, she was the only returning defender in 2010.

"It was hard that year because the other three girls were new, and I had to learn my role and how to tell the others when to step up or stay back," she said.

Last year, the defense finally came together, she said. This year, that cohesiveness remains.

"This year we know where we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to do," Stahlke said. "I think sometimes we might get too comfortable because we're the same group from last year."

Junior defender Torrie Lange said the defense has been playing well, just not consistently.

"There are some games where we've played very, very, very well, and there have been one or two games where we haven't played so well," she said. "We just need to be playing as consistently as we should be."

Overall, Neidell is pleased with his team's play so far this season and is confident the girls will do well in conference play, he said.

"Our mentality is getting stronger with every game," he said. "We just need to keep a greater level of concentration for a greater period of time."

"Overall, I'm pleased with the results. I like the progress we've made as a team," he said.

The team's goal this year is to win the Sun Belt Conference tournament, a feat that has never been done.

However, they have come close before. Last year, they lost in the title game to Florida International.

"We lost in (penalty kicks) in the finals, so we're excited to get out there and prove we should win," Stahlke said.
Golden Eagles to watch

Jason Weaver
No. 52, Left Tackle,
6-foot-5, 305 pounds
• Is one of four starters back from a 2011 offensive line that helped USM gain a school record of 6,459 total yards.
• Earned All-Conference USA Second Team honors in 2011.
• Is tasked with protecting the blind sides of USM QB’s Chris Campbell and Anthony Alford against WKU’s pass rush.

Tracy Lampley
No. 1, Receiver,
5-foot-9, 168 pounds
• Has 3,952 career all-purpose yards, putting him at No. 5 all-time in USM history.
• Has chance to become the first Golden Eagle to eclipse 1,000 career rushing, receiving, kick return and punt return yards.
• Was named the 2011 C-USA Championship Game MVP.

Jamie Collins
No. 8, Bandit End,
6-foot-4, 239 pounds
• Tallied game-high 13 tackles in opener against Nebraska.
• Had 98 tackles, a team-high 19.5 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks in 2011.
• Is playing his second year as the Bandit End in defensive coordinator Tommy West’s 4-2-5 scheme.

Deron Wilson
No. 22, Cornerback,
5-foot-10, 175 pounds
• Returned two interceptions for a touchdown last season.
• Has seven career interceptions and 129 career tackles.
• Is No. 5 all-time at USM with 27 pass breakups.

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