9-26-2015

UA12/2/1 Topper Extra

WKU Student Affairs

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Ferby steps into starring role for Hilltopper offense

BY BILLY RUTLEDGE
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Redshirt freshman running back D’Andre Ferby has had a much more active season so far than anyone would have predicted a month ago.

After Ferby was listed as the third-string running back to start the 2015 season, a slew of injuries to senior running back Leon Allen and redshirt junior running back Anthony Wales thrust the former Mr. Tennessee Football into the starting position.

Ferby recorded his first collegiate start last week at Indiana and ran the ball 21 times for 58 yards and two touchdowns.

The occasion was a long time coming for the three-star prospect from Nashville who has overcome four separate foot surgeries since middle school.

“I think Ferby did a good job,” Head Coach Jeff Brohm said. “He’s a big, physical runner. [He] ran the ball hard. He got us some key yards.”

Despite being pleased with what he saw from Ferby in Bloomington against Indiana, Brohm is expecting bigger things moving forward.

“Overall, I think he’s going to continue to improve, and we need him to be a big runner for us,” Brohm said. “I like the way he practices and the way he works, and because of that, I know he’s going to improve each week.”

The freshman’s first real action in red and white came during a time of sorrow.

After only two carries for eight yards in his hometown against Vanderbilt, Ferby found himself in a much different role the following week. Leon Allen suffered a season-ending knee injury in the home opener against Louisiana Tech, and with Anthony Wales already on the injured list, Ferby was the next man up.

He went on to rush for 39 yards and score his first career touchdown.

That night, he entered the spotlight as the WKU starting running back, a role held by prestigious alumni like current NFL players Bobby Rainey of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Antonio Andrews of the Tennessee Titans.

The offensive coaching staff especially — not just Brohm — have noticed Ferby flourish in a time when more was asked of him than expected.

“For what we asked them to do, I thought the running backs were solid,” offensive coordinator Tyson Helton said. “I felt really good about [Ferby]. He felt comfortable out there; he did an excellent job with everything we asked him to do.”

Helton also offered the same sentiment Brohm did about Ferby’s training.

“You are going to see him get better and better every single week,” Helton said.

Ferby hails from Nashville, where he won a Division II 2A State Championship at Ensworth High School.

Named Tennesse’s Mr. Football in 2013, he was redshirted the following year at the Hill. Now, just over three weeks into his first competitive season, the 6-foot-1-inch, 240-pound tailback is starting to turn some heads.

Among those taking notice are senior quarterback Brandon Doughty, who is impressed not just by Ferby’s running ability but also by his overall athleticism and knowledge of his position.

“I thought he did a really good job at pass protection, standing and blocking. He ran the ball hard,” Doughty said.

The sixth-year senior captain was quick to note the team is behind Ferby in his development into a collegiate athlete and added that growing pains are all part of the game.

“Yeah, he made some mistakes — missed some holes — but that’s what you are going to expect from a redshirt freshman guy… you can deal with that,” Doughty said. “He did his job, executed and did a good job.”

No one has been more critical of Ferby throughout this time than himself, which shows not only the first-year starter’s work ethic but also to his awareness of the situation he has inherited.

After the Indiana game, Ferby gave himself a C grade, saying he had a lot more to work on.

“I feel like I can make more plays than I did,” Ferby said. “I’m kind of hard on myself, so I’m going to keep coming out here and proving myself. When Saturday comes, I’ll do my best.”

While he acknowledged he still has lots to learn, the redshirt freshman has become an integral part of one of the nation’s top offensive attacks.

For the WKU football team to find success in the rest of the season, Ferby will have to continue to show his worth.
Hilltoppers with higher aspirations for second C-USA year

BY BILLY RUTLEDGE
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Since day one of the 2015 WKU football season, Head Coach Jeff Brohm and company have preached one goal: win a conference championship.

In their seventh season in the FBS and second in Conference USA, the Hilltoppers have yet to capture a title.

Now, after four coaches, hundreds of games and six years of missed opportunities, WKU has a good shot of turning its dream into a reality.

The 2015 Hilltoppers are supposed to be that champion team.

Picked by many, including Sports Illustrated, to bring home the C-USA Championship, sixth-year quarterback Brandon Doughty and the high-powered Brohm offense are expected to bring a title home — a title that has eluded the Toppers in the FBS era.

So far, the Hilltoppers have started the season 2-1 with wins over Southeastern Conference foe Vanderbilt, powerful C-USA opponent Louisiana Tech — who thrashed the Hilltoppers in 2014 by a score of 59-10 — and a narrow defeat against Big Ten contender Indiana.

The loss to the Hoosiers was a wake-up call to many, including the redshirt senior quarterback.

Yet the Hilltoppers have come a long way from their years in the Sun Belt Conference.

“All our goals are still there,” Doughty said. “We said our goal was to win a conference championship, and it’s still there. We’re 1-0 in the conference. We have to play this game [against Miami of Ohio] and work to win this game because we want to defend our home, but all our goals are still there.”

Doughty stressed taking the games week by week and always staying focused on the team’s goals, especially when it comes to conference opponents. He referenced his experience with the program and its growth as a reason to stay focused.

“We have to just understand that. We lost by three to an undefeated Big Ten opponent,” Doughty said, adding that this would have been hard to believe four years ago. “We were 0-37. So the growth of our program has been there, and I’ve been through it all.”

WKU has already found conference success in 2015.

Three Hilltopper players swept the Conference USA Player of the Week awards on Sept. 14. In doing so, WKU became the first team to sweep the awards since Tulane in 2013.

Doughty bounced back from a quiet performance against Vanderbilt to claim conference accolades with his performance against Louisiana Tech. Also lauded were redshirt sophomore specialist Kylen Towner and junior safety Marcus Ward.

Doughty threw for 441 yards and a touchdown to earn the Offensive Player of the Week award.

Towner was named the C-USA Special Teams Player of the week after returning a 98-yard kickoff for a touchdown. His return marked the sixth longest in WKU history.

Ward was named Defensive Player of the Week after accumulating 11 tackles with two tackles for a loss and two pass breakups, all career highs for the defensive back.

The balance of all three segments of the game will be critical for the Hilltoppers, especially since they continue to play in so many close games. WKU’s last five games have been decided by three points or less, which means every mistake matters that much more.

“We haven’t won many games by more than a couple points, so in order for us to win, we have to execute, and all three segments have to play well,” Brohm said. “That’s kind of what we believe that we have to become as a team ... all three segments [have] to play really well for us to win.”

In the first season in Conference USA, the WKU athletics department won eight total conference championships, which tied a record in C-USA’s 20-year history. Now, the WKU football team is the next entity looking for that championship.
ABOVE: WKU linebacker Nick Holt (10) tackles Indiana running back Devine Redding (34) during an NCAA football game at Memorial Stadium in Bloomington, Indiana on Sept. 19. NICK WAGNER/HERALD

RIGHT: WKU quarterback Brandon Doughty (12) hands the ball off to running back D'Andre Ferby (32) against Indiana during an NCAA football game at Memorial Stadium in Bloomington, Indiana. NICK WAGNER/HERALD
TOPPER EXTRA

ABOVE: WKU wide receiver Antwane Grant (3) misses a deep throw in the first half during a WKU’s game against Indiana on Sept. 19 at Memorial Field in Bloomington, Indiana. MICHAEL NOBLE JR. / HERALD
Hilltoppers will look to rebound against 1-2 Miami

BY JONAH PHILLIPS
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This weekend’s matchup versus Miami (Ohio) will be interesting for more reasons than one.

For starters, this matchup favors the Hilltoppers more than any of their previous three matchups against Southeastern Conference opponent Vanderbilt (1-2), Conference USA foe Louisiana Tech (1-2) and Big 10 opponent Indiana University (3-0).

Miami (Ohio) comes into the contest with a 1-2 record after winning its first game of the year over Presbyterian and then falling in consecutive games to powerhouse programs Wisconsin and Cincinnati.

Granting, while the Hilltoppers started the week as three-touchdown favorites, it is difficult to know exactly what Miami will bring to the table. The two teams clash this weekend for the first time in program history.

This game against an opponent the Hilltoppers should beat comes at an opportune time; WKU is coming off its first loss of the season in a 35-38 defeat to Indiana.

Head Coach Jeff Brohm will look for his program to rebound at home against a team his squad should be confident facing.

And there is reason for the Hilltoppers to go into their clash with Miami confidently after last week’s loss.

WKU is averaging 30 points a game while Miami is averaging just 19.7. Additionally, the Hilltoppers’ point differential — points scored minus points allowed — sits at +2 while Miami’s is -43.

WKU has accumulated 1,400 yards of total offense over three games opposed to Miami’s 1,071, and the Hilltoppers have scored 11 touchdowns on the season compared to Miami’s eight.

The RedHawks’ senior quarterback Drew Kummer came into 2015 with playing time in just two games during his junior season; he racked up only 54 yards. Doughty, on the other hand, was at the helm of one of the most productive passing offenses the nation saw last year.

This season, Kummer has tallied 649 passing yards with six touchdowns and four interceptions. Doughty has nearly double that number of passing yards with 1,134, to which he adds five touchdown passes and two interceptions.

Statistics aside, this weekend promises to be an exciting one for Hilltopper fans. Last time WKU played at home, fans endured the season-long loss of senior running back Leon Allen on the way to beating La. Tech.

In the latter stages of week two and for the entirety of week three versus Indiana, Topper fans witnessed the rise of redshirt freshman running back D’Andre Ferby, who was the 2013 Tennessee Mr. Football in Division II-AA.

Since taking over as the Hilltoppers’ number one running back, Ferby has rushed the ball 37 times for 127 yards. While Doughty leads the team in touchdowns, with five passing touchdowns, Ferby leads the team in individual touchdowns with three rushing scores.

Through the first three games of this season, the Hilltopper defense has allowed their opponents 1,612 yards of offense compared to 1,526 yards at the same mark last year.

That stat might seem alarming considering the defense’s performance for most of last season, but some comparisons are more encouraging. For example, WKU has allowed 29.3 points per game in 2015 compared to 41.0 points per game at this point in 2014.

Whether you want to see D’Andre Ferby continue to emerge or are keeping an eye on statistics in the matchup against Miami — or maybe you just want to catch a game of Saturday afternoon football — be at Smith Stadium at 2:30 p.m. to watch the Hilltoppers try to rebound from their first loss of the season.
## Then & Now

### WKU Football Through 3 Games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Yards</strong></td>
<td>1,826 Yards</td>
<td>1,400 Yards</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Points Allowed Per Game</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Avg. Rushing Yards Per Game</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net Rushing Yards</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rushing TDs</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### First Three Games

- **Evansville** 59-31 (W)
- **Illinois** 42-34 (L)
- **Montana Tech** 47-50 (L)
- **Vanderbilt** 14-12 (W)
- **Texas** 41-38 (W)
- **Louisiana** 35-38 (L)

### Redzone Score Percentage

- **2014**: 93%
- **2015**: 69%
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