1980

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The 1980 season will be Jimmy Feix's 13th year as head coach of the Hilltoppers, but his name has been closely connected with winning football at Western Kentucky for much longer than that.

His association with Western gridiron successes began in September, 1949, when he came to the campus as a folding tenor voice from Henderson, Ky. In his senior year, 1952, he and his Hilltopper teammates tied for the Ohio Valley Conference championship and added a Refrigerator Bowl win over Arkansas State to finish with a 9-1 record.

At the same time, Feix was earning Little All-America honors for himself. When his college playing days were over, the New York Giants of the National Football League drafted him and he was impressive in pre-season drills, but a serious injury early that fall ended his pro career.

Feix returned to Western in 1957 after four years in the U.S. Air Force. He served as a graduate assistant that first year while completing the requirements for the Master's degree, then became a full-time assistant under former Hilltopper Head Coach Nick Denes the following season.

Feix was named head coach in December, 1967, when Denes retired from active coaching. In 1968, his "rookie" season as head coach, Feix led Western to seven wins against only two losses and a tie with nationally ranked-and bowl-bound Akron.


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1980 Outlook

Coach Jimmy Feix and the Western Kentucky Hilltoppers are looking to turn things around during the 1980 football season, after struggling through a disappointing 5-5-0 campaign a year ago.

There are several reasons for this optimistic outlook, including the return of OVC Offensive Player of the Year-Western Kentucky's John Hall. A senior quarterback, Hall was named first-team All-OVC for the second consecutive season last fall, completing 108 of 215 passes (.502) for 1,418 yards and 10 touchdowns.

In addition, the Hilltoppers have six experienced running backs returning to vie for the starting backfield slots. Senior Nate Jones probably has the inside track on the job, if he successfully recovers from a knee injury that knocked him out of all three games last fall. However, junior Elmer Caldwell will have to be reckoned with. Filling in for the injured Hall last fall were three junior running backs and five seniors. Senior Craig Freeman (30 yards) will also see duty.

Junior Troy Saunders is the front man at fullback. He ran for 358 yards last fall and is an excellent blocker.

Despite the loss of Eddie Preston, one of the premier pass receivers in the school's history, Western Kentucky has some talented catchers to rely on.

Heading the list is senior tight end Ricky Gwinn (30 catches, 366 yards) last fall and is an excellent blocker.