Stockstill likes teams mental approach

Final fall scrimmage set for Saturday

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Stockstill on Friday's Practice: "It was a nice practice today. I was pleased with the way we competed and the effort they displayed the entire practice. We had a lot of good second-effort plays today and I really liked their mental approach, especially with this being the 15th practice. The leadership was much better today. Everyone did a good job of fighting through the workout."

Stockstill on QB Dwight Dasher: "He continues to get better with each practice, especially in his fundamentals. He has a great attitude, is listening to Tony (Franklin) and taking coaching extremely well. He has been a positive leader on the team and for the offense."

Stockstill on Saturday Scrimmage: "Basically, we scrimmage every day but Saturday is tackling to the ground rather than staying on your feet. We are just going to let them play and see how much we have improved over the last week and see how fast we can play on both sides of the ball. The coaches are not going to be telling them what to do because we want to see if they can get lined up right, have good fundamentals, and are game ready. This is the last major test for us to figure out our two-deep heading into the season opener."

Q&A with RB Phillip Tanner

How does being a senior and taking on a leadership role affect your spot in the backfield? "It is huge to know that I am like the only back to have game experience. We have a bunch of newer guys with new experience. We had D.D. (Kyles) and Marquise (Branton) in the spring. They are really learning a lot and improving more and more everyday. Other young guys, like Benjamin Cunningham are looking good too. Everyday is an improvement. Some things come with experience, but everyone is catching on to it really fast."

What does it mean to you entering your senior year that you are really the only running back with a lot of experience? "It means a lot and is a lot on my shoulders. But, I accept the challenge. I tell the guys playing behind me all the time to come to practice everyday to compete for a starting spot and not come in and say 'I am playing behind Phillip Tanner. Just come in and compete as if you will be a starter. In that case, they give it their all."

How do you see the offense progressing thus far in camp? "We are looking really good and coming together as a team. There is still a lot of stuff we need to work on, as far as tempo and things like that. I feel, as a whole, everyone is buying into the new offense and having fun."

The up-tempo offense that Coach Franklin is installing, is it the way you thought it would be to this point or is it still a work-in-progress? "We are loving it. We are buying into it, but there is still a lot of room for improvement. That is why we come out here everyday to get better everyday."

Today is the final two-a-day. Walk us through how those practices affect you physically and mentally. "It is tough all the way around the clock from the mental aspects to meetings to the physical aspect where your legs are dead. Normally at the end of 22 periods in practice, you go home and get rest. But on two-a-days, you break practice and come right back out here and do it again. Pretty much, the locker room is our home. You spend more time in the locker room lying on the floor than your own bed. But at the end of it all, I will sit back and think it is my last one as a collegiate athlete. It is a bittersweet moment, knowing the tough part is out of the way, but at the same time, I know I will not have another one."

Q&A with S Jeremy Kellem

How do you see the progress of the defense shaping up thus far in camp? "First of all, I want to thank the Lord most importantly. Without Him, you cannot do anything, but with Him, you can do anything. "I think the defense has been shaping up really well. I think we are coming together as a team and want each other to succeed. As individuals, we all have the mindset we want to make the play coach wants us to make and be playmakers. In order for our defense to be successful, all 11 of us or whoever is on the field want to be playmakers. We are all coming together as a team and root for each other on the sidelines. We are teaching each other. One thing Coach (Manny) Diaz is teaching in this camp is not to be sensitive. Basically, if a teammate comes and tells you 'to do this or do this right,' then do not be sensitive and get offended. Just look at them and say 'I will go out there and do it.' That will help us come together more as a unit and get rid of the individual mindset."

What is the status of the defensive backs to this point? "I call the defensive backs the state of Florida since pretty much everyone in the group is from Florida. I think we are shaping up really good. As far as me, Alex Suber, Kevin (Brown) and (Rod) Issac we will be playing together for a second year. We know each other and communicate well. As a secondary, we are coming together really well. We just have to perfect our techniques, assignments and alignments and keep getting better."

How does the new up-tempo offense affect what you do as a defensive back? "With the spread, it is all about speed. Sometimes, they just attack. After one play where you may blitz, you have to get back on the other side of the line of scrimmage and get the play, get located and lined up. It is causing you to get lined up faster, which helps you get in shape in practice. Clemson does not run a spread like we do. I think if we play our offense more like a pro-style, traditional huddle,

then we will be in even more shape and get lined up faster. With the spread, it is helping us get to the line quicker."

Tomorrow is the final scrimmage of the fall. What are your expectations coming off the last scrimmage heading in? "I want to go out with no injuries, give great effort, and eliminate the missed assignments. The first scrimmage you are going to have a lot of busted coverages, but now we have two weeks under our belts with all the plays in. We want to go out there and not miss an assignment and go all out and just play. Everyone on offense and defense just wants to be a playmaker."

Notes: Congratulations to Wide Receivers Coach Justin Watts and his wife Lauren with the arrival of a baby boy on Thursday evening (Chase Michael Watts) ... During the team portion of the morning practice, Dwight Dasher had four touchdown passes including three in a row from 45 or more yards out. The first TD was a gorgeous pass to a diving Desmond Gee that covered 50 yards.

NEXT PRACTICE: The Blue Raiders will practice on Saturday at 4:10 PM. The practice is closed to the public.

SEASON TICKETS: 1-888-YES-MTSU OR GoBlueRaiders.com

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