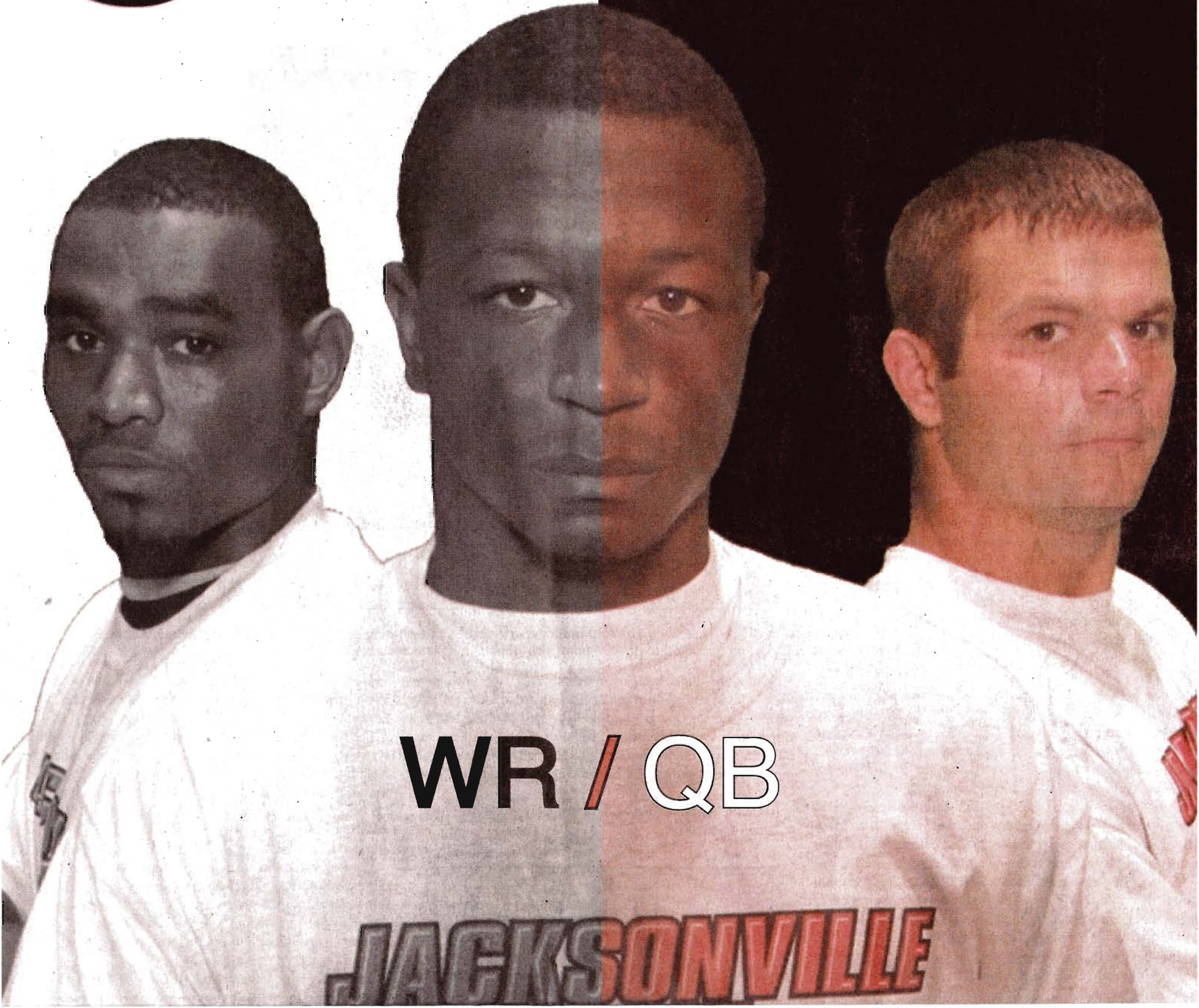


the Chanticleer

FALL SPORTS PREVIEW



WR / QB

JACKSONVILLE

JACKSONVILLE
STATE

PLAY / MAKER

You already know **Taurean Rhetta** (center) as the Gamecocks' best wideout. But this season, the **playmaker** will also be the third string quarterback behind starter **Matt Hardin** (right) and newcomer **Cedric Johnson** (left). Rhetta will be the key to JSU's **new look offense**. Read more on **3B**.

COUNTDOWN INSIDE...



VOLLEYBALL

After Two OVC titles in a row, the volleyball team is not about to rest yet. Lead by four seniors, the Gamecocks look to again run the conference table. **2B**



SOCCER

The starting goalie job for the JSU soccer team will be up for grabs in 2007. But the Gamecocks are determined, whoever their leader will be. **4B**



VOLLEYBALL

the familiar

4

By Patrick Swafford
Sports Editor

Ringo Starr once sang that he got by with a little help from his friends.

Maybe that could be an unspoken motto for Jacksonville State's volleyball team.

Few athletic programs at JSU have the recent history that this team carries.

In the past two seasons, the volleyball team has won two Ohio Valley Conference tournament titles, made two straight NCAA tournament appearances and posted a perfect 16-0 record in conference play in 2006 en route to the regular season conference title.

And the tremendous success can largely be attributed to four seniors: Abbey Breit, Abbey Vierling, Joi Watts and Rebekah Nichols. These four stand on the threshold of something that has never been achieved in the program.

Should the Gamecocks win the 2007 OVC title, there will be no argument that this senior class is the most successful in the program's history.

"I think a lot of it has to do with our attitude," Vierling said. "It's more than just ability and skill and who the best team is. [JSU coach Rick Nold] has been good, especially with our class, about teaching us that attitude is important and your level of competitiveness. I think that's what has given us success in the past."

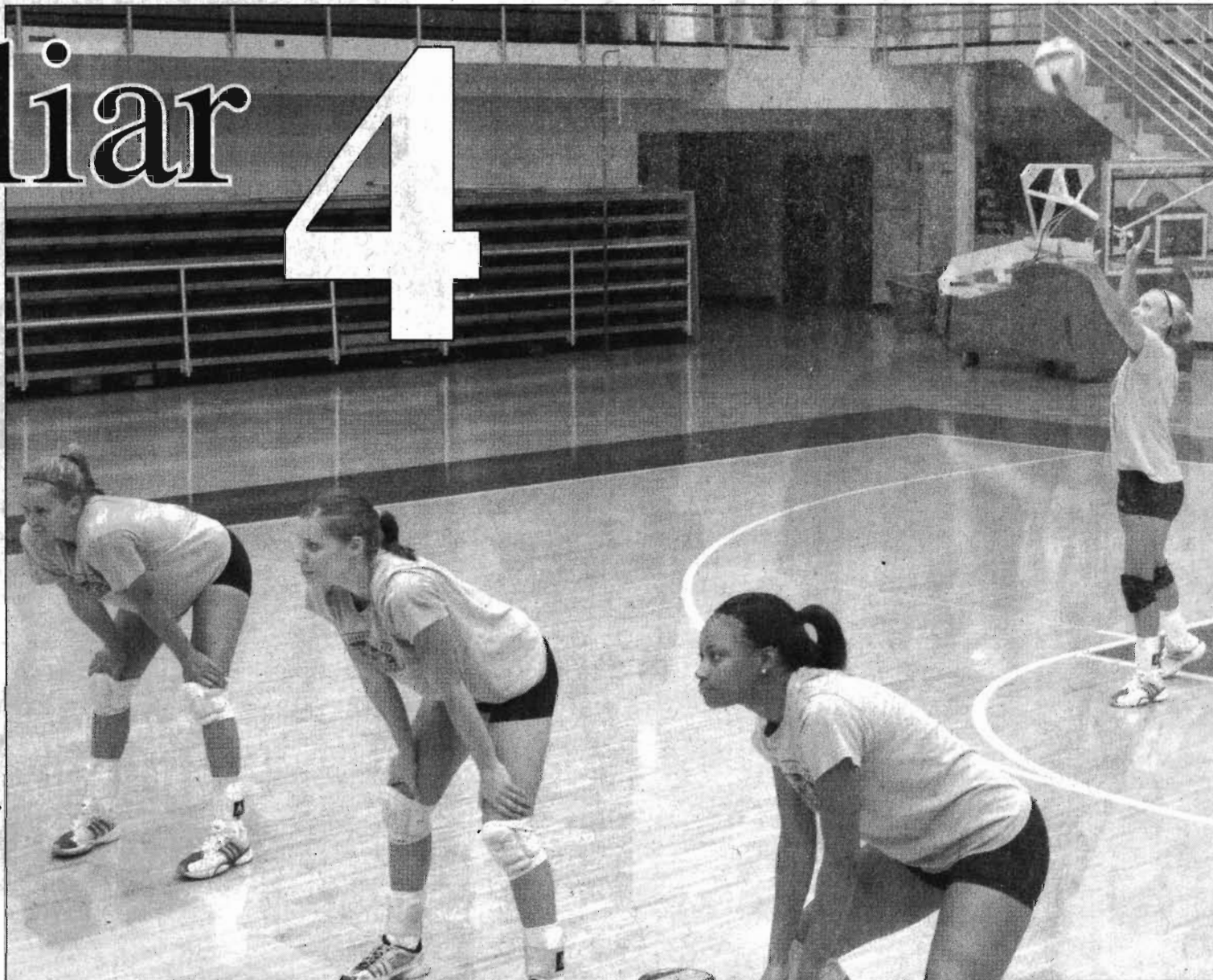
The four seniors, along with the previous two senior classes, have done a great deal to build the volleyball program up to one of the OVC's elite.

"Since we've gotten things really going, they've been a big part of it," Nold said. "Not just them, but the classes before and developing an attitude you want to see every day. They've done a great job during the preseason in taking that attitude and passing it along to the newer players. They're all great players, but I think attitude is what's gotten them the farthest."

The volleyball team takes a full throttle approach to their offense. They attack every play and rarely slow down. However, that may not be their greatest strength. It's their team chemistry that makes them unique.

"A lot of our time in preseason is used to get used to each other," Breit said. "We have seven new players. We eat every meal together. We go through [injury] treatment together. Sometimes in the evenings we hang out."

They've been seen walking into JSU basketball games as a group. Not just a few at a time, but every member at the same time.



The volleyball team will rely heavily on its four most experienced – and winningest – players, Rebekah Nichols, Abbey Breit, Joi Watts and Abbey Vierling (from left to right). Photo: Kira Wright/The Chanticleer

"That's one of the reasons it was so easy for me to come back," Joi Watts said of her decision to return for her fifth year. "These three, and of course Brittney Whitten and Lia Bogatyreva. Everything we do, we're probably together. Even on our off days. Even when we come off road trips, on Saturday nights we're together. It's easier when your teammates are your friends.

It's hard to think that if I didn't play volleyball that I wouldn't know these people."



1,445

Number of kills for Abbey Breit, a new school record. Breit accomplished the feat on Saturday, Aug. 25.

The team chemistry that has helped these four women lead JSU to back-to-back NCAA tournament appearances has also helped them earn individual accolades as well.

The list of their on-court accomplishments reads a mile long. Watts was named to last year's OVC All-Tournament team. Nichols earned second team preseason All-OVC this year. All four of them have earned OVC academic honors. Then there's the short novel of Breit's accomplishments, highlighted by consecutive OVC Offensive Player of the Year awards in 2005 and 2006, and the 2006 OVC Female Athlete of the Year.

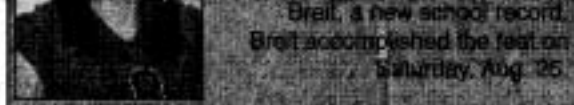
The success of this team has certainly made them the focus of the other ten OVC squads this season. In going a perfect 16-0 in the regular season, they swept 15 of those games and lost only one game in the final game of the season.

With all the success this program has had, what can this group of seniors do for an encore?

"Hopefully win another one," Breit said. "That's always the goal. We're always pushing ourselves to improve. That's a

group. Not just a few at a time, but every member at the same time.

Teams talk about how much their group is like a family. The JSU volleyball team doesn't talk about it, they show it.



Breit, a new school record. Breit accomplished the feat on Saturday, Aug. 26.

"Hopefully win another one," Breit said. "That's always the goal. We're always pushing ourselves to improve. That's a part of building the program. It's just trying to improve and become better."

2007 JSU VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

8/24/2007 vs Arkansas State / Oxford, Miss. **W 3-0**
8/25/2007 vs Missouri / Magnolia Invitational / Oxford, Miss. **L 2-3**
8/25/2007 Ole Miss / Magnolia Invitational / Oxford, Miss. **L 0-3**
8/31/2007 vs Appalachian State / Comcast Lady Vol Classic / Knoxville, Tenn.
8/31/2007 vs Belmont / Comcast Lady Vol Classic / Knoxville, Tenn.
9/1/2007 vs Indiana / Comcast Lady Vol Classic / Knoxville, Tenn.
9/9/2007 vs ALBANY / JACKSONVILLE
9/14/2007 at *Tennessee Martin / Martin, Tenn.
9/15/2007 at *Murray State / Murray, Ky.
9/19/2007 vs *SAMDOR / JACKSONVILLE
9/22/2007 vs *AUSTIN PEAY / JACKSONVILLE
9/28/2007 vs *TENNESSEE TECH / JACKSONVILLE
9/29/2007 vs *TENNESSEE STATE / JACKSONVILLE
10/5/2007 at *Eastern Kentucky / Richmond, Ky.
10/6/2007 at *Morehead State / Morehead, Ky.
10/9/2007 at *Austin Peay / Clarksville, Tenn.
10/12/2007 vs *EASTERN ILLINOIS / JACKSONVILLE
10/13/2007 vs *SOUTHEAST MISSOURI / JACKSONVILLE
10/19/2007 vs *MURRAY STATE / JACKSONVILLE
10/20/2007 vs *TENNESSEE MARTIN / JACKSONVILLE
10/23/2007 at *Samford / Birmingham, Ala.
10/25/2007 at *Tennessee State / Nashville, Tenn.
10/27/2007 at *Tennessee Tech / Cookeville, Tenn.
11/2/2007 at *Southeast Missouri / Cape Girardeau, Mo.
11/3/2007 at *Eastern Illinois / Champaign, Ill.
11/9/2007 vs *MOREHEAD STATE / JACKSONVILLE
11/10/2007 vs *EASTERN KENTUCKY / JACKSONVILLE
11/15/2007 vs TBA / OVC Tournament / TBA
**Indicates an OVC game*

A COUPLE OF POINTS:

- The Gamecock volleyball team is ranked first in the preseason OVC poll, receiving 18 of a possible 22 first-place votes. Murray State is second, followed by Eastern Kentucky.

- Abbey Breit and Britney Whitten were both named to the First Team Preseason All-OVC. Rebekah Nichols received Second Team honors.

2007 season preview: Looking for the 3-peat

By Jared Gravette
Staff Sports Writer

When the Jax State volleyball team takes the court for the first time in 2007, the expectations will be at an all-time high.

The Gamecocks are coming off of the most successful season in school history, running the table (16-0) in the OVC. Even more impressive than their conference record is the fact that the team only dropped one game during regular season play.

With JSU entering the 2007 season having won the last two conference tournaments, the Gamecocks will definitely be looking over their shoulders.

"I think we've got a target on our back," senior and reigning OVC Female Athlete of the Year Abby Breit said.

JSU has a number of key players coming back to make a run at a third straight OVC title.

Arguably the best of the bunch, Breit returns for her senior year after earning OVC Player of the Year and Honorable Mention All-America honors in both her sophomore and junior seasons. Breit averaged 5.5 kills a game last year.



Senior Rebekah Nichols gets ready for the serve. File photo

Rebekah Nichols, Joi Watts and Abbey Vierling join Breit in the most successful senior class in school history.

Watts, an offensive hitter and fifth-year senior, ended last season on fire. She finished the season with 178 kills and a .240 attack percentage.

Nichols, an Oxford, Ala. native, enters 2007 as a Second Team Preseason All-OVC selection. She continued her improvement last year with a career-best 284 kills.

Vierling, a defensive specialist, will finally be given the opportunity to start at libero after the departure of Jessica Starck. As a junior, Vierling totaled 235 digs with an average of 2.45 per game.

Also returning to the JSU lineup is OVC Freshman of the Year and Second Team All-OVC selection Britney Whitten. Whitten is one of the most explosive hitters on the roster. She finished second on the team in kills, totaling 312 for an average of 3.18 per game last year.

"As far as expectations go, we would love to go undefeated and win conference again, but we really want to play at our highest level as consistently and as many times as we can," Whitten said.

If JSU is to repeat, a lot of the load will be placed on a group of six freshmen. The Gamecocks have a number of holes to fill after the departure of several key seniors from last year's squad.

The biggest loss comes at the setter position where the Gamecocks lost the school's all-time assists leader Emily Withers.

Withers earned First Team All-OVC honors last year, averaging 13.81 assists per game. She finished her career with 4,340 assists and is the only player in school history to record 2,000 assists and 1,000 digs in a career.

To complicate matters even more, Withers' scheduled replacement, sophomore Melanie Pund, transferred at the end of last season. The pressure of replacing Withers at the setter position will sit squarely on the shoulders of freshman Brooke Schumacher, according to head coach Rick Nold.

RICK NOLD



- Head coach, volleyball
- 6th season
- 101-47 record
- "Our expectations are what they always are. We feel like we can compete for an NCAA berth."

"That is going to be a really important position for her. She will definitely make a big impact for us," Nold said.

Schumacher, an Illinois native, credits the chemistry of this team as something that has eased the pressure of starting.

"I'm comfortable because I feel like we are a together team. Everyone is encouraging no matter what. So, I'm not really worried that I'm going to let anyone down," Schumacher said.

Schumacher may not be the only freshman earning a starting role this season.

"So far the way it's looked in the preseason, Caitlin Vorbeck has come in and really shown some versatility to play for us," Nold said. "Right now, they're probably both going to be in a starting role."

Despite the loss of Withers, Starck, Pund and Sheri Weyer from last year's team, the chemistry that has made the last two seasons so special is still there.

The girls are more than just teammates. They consider each other to be more like family.

For the veterans, one way to bring the seven new freshmen into the team atmosphere is to spend the majority of time together off the court.

The Gamecocks opened the 2007 season with a 3-0 victory over Arkansas State on Aug. 24 in the Magnolia Invitational in Oxford, Mississippi. On Aug. 25, JSU lost its games against Missouri and Ole Miss to begin the season 1-2.

On Aug. 31, JSU will take on Appalachian State and Belmont in the Comcast Lady Vol Classic in Knoxville, TN.

FOOTBALL

3-fold attack

By Patrick Swafford
Sports Editor

the 2 gunmen

The Gamecocks have the most depth they've had in a long time under center with the return of Matt Hardin as the opening day starter, coupled with the arrival of highly touted JuCo transfer Cedric Johnson.

Johnson, the Junior College All-American from Copiah-Lincoln (Miss.), made an early impression with the JSU faithful this spring, throwing over 300 yards in the spring game, immediately starting an apparent quarterback controversy.

Coach Crowe squelched that idea before the Gamecocks began their first fall practice, with his statement that Hardin was the team's starter.

Much like Crowe did two years ago when Hardin was the backup to Maurice Mullins, Johnson will see action on the third series of each game.

The differences in Hardin's and Johnson's styles aren't that staggering. Johnson has the edge in the speed department, but don't let Hardin fool you. He has the ability to make plays with his legs as well as his arm.

While Johnson is the more athletic of the two, Hardin has the edge in experience. Johnson had a stellar career during his junior college days, but this is Hardin's fourth year at Jacksonville State and in Football Championship Subdivision (formerly known as Division I-AA) level.

the
weapon

It was NFL Hall of Famer Michael Irvin who brought us the term "playmaker."

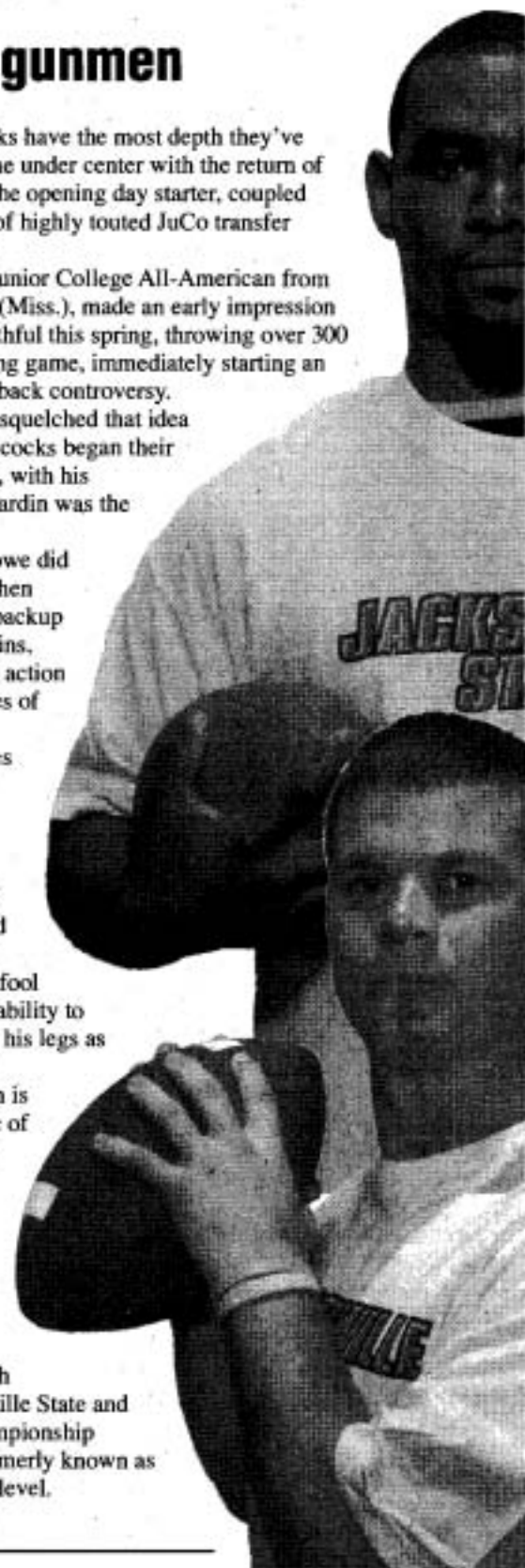
If the Gamecock football team has it their way, their own playmaker, receiver Taurean Rhetta, will spark a new-look offense.

"Taurean's our third quarterback and at some point this season, he's going to line up at quarterback," JSU coach Jack Crowe said. "It's like when Alabama had David Palmer. The best way to get him the ball is to have him take the snap."

Rhetta, a senior from Birmingham, enters the 2007

"We've got a few things in the playbook," Rhetta said. "We're not going to break out anything too spectacular, but we're going to keep everybody guessing."

Rhetta's primary role will still be as the number one receiver. Crowe says this will be the best receiving corps he has



Above: Taurean Rhetta Right (from top to bottom):
Cedric Johnson and Matt Hardin
All photos by Kira Wright/The Chanticleer, Illustration by

Cedric Johnson and Matt Hardin
All photos by Kira Wright/The Chanticleer, Illustration by Kevin Jeffers/The Chanticleer

option at quarterback behind incumbent starter Matt Hardin and JuCo transfer Cedric Johnson.

At some point this season, we will see the playmaking wide receiver line up under center. "Really, I'm just the emergency quarterback in case someone goes down," Rhetta humbly said. "I've been practicing those plays to get me comfortable with them just in case."

"But, they might slip me in here and there just to shake things up." Rhetta caught 30 passes for 568 yards in a primarily run-based offense last year and has over 1,200 yards receiving with 10 touchdowns in his collegiate career.

While he's been one of JSU's best receivers over the past four years, Rhetta is no stranger to the quarterback role.

In his high school career, Rhetta threw for 1,851 yards and 17 touchdowns in his senior year as signal-caller for Parker High in Birmingham. He threw for more than 3,000 yards total in high school.

When Rhetta sees action under center this year, it won't be the first time he's done so in Jacksonville. As a freshman, Rhetta saw limited action in 2004 in a similar role.

"Basically, I take it as being a decoy," Rhetta said. "When people see me lining up at quarterback, knowing that I play receiver, their first mind set is 'he's going to get the ball.' I just try to be a decoy and get the handoff done, or when I'm not handing the ball off, just making sure that my fakes look like I did."

One possibility is that Rhetta could line up under center in a formation similar to Arkansas' "Wildcat" formation that features pre-season Heisman candidate Darren McFadden.

Rhetta, a senior from Birmingham, enters the 2007 season as the top receiver on JSU's depth chart and as the third

the best receiving corps he has coached at JSU.

Josh Moten, James Wilkerson, Derrick Harris and Maurice Dupree will join Rhetta as weapons in these new-look sets, enabling the two-year starter to open things up in the passing game.

"It gives me goosebumps just thinking about it," Hardin said. "Just having this receiving crew that we've had for the last four years has helped us out a lot."

Just because Rhetta and company will help to spread the field, don't think Crowe will abandon the running game altogether. JSU has three talented running backs whom Rhetta has called "The Terrible Three."

The extra depth at the receiver position won't necessarily change the overall look of the Gamecocks offense, but it likely won't look like the run-heavy offense it had been with the departure of record-setting back Clay Green.

"I wouldn't say [it's] a lot different because we're still going to run the ball first to open it up for the pass," Rhetta said. "It's just going to help each position on offense out a whole lot. There's going to be more to the pass than there has been, though."

As for any surprises the offense will have for the rest of the Ohio Valley Conference, JSU's playmaker isn't letting anyone in on the secret.

"I don't know," Rhetta said. "You're just going to have to wait and see. It's going to be pretty exciting. We've still got more stuff to put in and work on and I think it's going to be a pretty exciting year. I can't reveal all the secrets."



BREAKDOWN: Other positions

Running Backs

Gone are the days of Clay Green and Oscar Bonds. What the Gamecocks do have is a trio of runners.

Daniel Jackson looks to be the opening day starter, but newcomer Anthony Jones will get his fair share of touches.

Jackson got at least one touch in all of JSU's 11 games in 2006, rushing for 299 yards on 60 carries as a backup.

Jones comes to JSU after playing his first two seasons at Troy and has been very impressive in both spring and fall camps.

Jones' arrival also brought into question the 2007 status of Shawn Green. Green was almost redshirted last season and head coach Jack Crowe made the tough decision just before game-day preparations began to sit the Jacksonville native.

The biggest move of the off-season was the decision to move last year's starting center Ronald Murray to fullback. Murray's move gives JSU a lead blocker with plenty of experience opening up holes for the running game. However, redshirt freshman Alphonso Freency looks as if he has secured the starting job.

Receivers

There is more than just a small buzz around the team that says that wide receivers will play a more important role on this team than in recent years.

In addition to Rhetta, the returns of Josh Moten and last year's surprise James Wilkerson give JSU a threat in any three-receiver set. The trio combined for more than 1,200 yards receiving and seven touchdowns in 2006.

Rhetta lit up opposing defenses last season, catching a team-high four touchdowns with an average of 18.9 yards per catch.

Wilkerson finished second on the team in catches and receiving yards as a freshman and averaged 18.6 yards per catch.

Moten has been a weapon for any JSU signal caller since his arrival. A former Alabama high school record holder for most receiving yards in a season, Moten finished third on the team in 2006 with 236 yards receiving.

Add to that the athletic Derrick Harris and Maurice Dupree to the fold to give the receiver corps some extra athleticism, and the possibility of four- or five-receiver sets.

Defense

JSU lost standout outside linebacker LeMarcus Rowell as well as three-quarters of their secondary in Craig Agee, Montae Pitts and Kenny Brown.

Returning are linebackers Drew Robinson and Marquise Elston, as well as nose guard John Scott. Scott tallied 23 tackles and a sack in ten games last year.

The Gamecocks bring plenty of youth and speed at cornerback. Jarvis Smith saw playing time as a true freshman last year and T.J. Heath looks to translate an outstanding prep career into success at the collegiate level.

Carroll Clark spent last season as the third cornerback on the depth chart and anchors a young stable of defensive backs.

Kenny Walker makes the transition from receiver to safety this season and will be playing alongside returning starter Mike Johnson. Johnson finished fifth in tackles last year.

From an experience standpoint, this defense lacks what last year's had. However, this unit doesn't lack anything in terms of athleticism. Don't be surprised if the Gamecocks still rank near the top of the OVC.

Special Teams

Punter Zach Walden had a 2006 to remember, dropping 22 punts inside the opponents' 20 yard line, averaging 41.2 yards per punt and blasting a school record 81-yard punt against Tennessee Tech on Oct. 28. He was also named the OVC Special Teams Player of the Week four times last season and National Special Teams Player of the Week for the week of Sept. 3.

In 2006, kicker Gavin Hallford was 13-of-15 from inside the 40 and only missed one extra point kick. However, Hallford struggled outside of his comfort zone, missing all seven kicks from beyond the 40. Hallford has only connected on one kick from the 40-plus range.

The return game gets a boost of athleticism this year with Maurice Dupree returning both punts and kickoffs this year. Dupree looks to fill the hole left by the graduation of Craig Agee and Clay Green.

—Patrick Swafford

2007 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Location	TV
Sat 9/1/2007	at Alabama State Montgomery, Ala.	
Sat 9/8/2007	vs Chattanooga Jacksonville, Ala.	CSS
Sat 9/15/2007	at Memphis Memphis, Tenn.	
Sat 9/22/2007	vs *Eastern Kentucky Jacksonville, Ala.	
Sat 9/29/2007	at *Murray State Murray, Ky.	WJXS
Thu 10/4/2007	vs *Tennessee-Martin Jacksonville, Ala.	CSS
Thu 10/11/2007	at *Austin Peay Clarksville, Tenn.	ESPNU
Sat 10/20/2007	vs *Tennessee Tech Homecoming - Jacksonville, Ala.	CSS
Sat 11/3/2007	at *Samford Birmingham, Ala.	
Sat 11/10/2007	vs *Eastern Illinois Jacksonville, Ala.	CSS
Sat 11/17/2007	at *Southeast Missouri State Cape Girardeau, Mo.	

* denotes OVC game

SOCCER

2 goalies, 1 job

By Patrick Swafford
Sports Editor

For much of last season, Jacksonville State soccer split time between their talented duo of goalkeepers, senior Elizabeth

Selasky and junior Kate Kelly.

In the spring, JSU coach Julie Davis decided that both Selasky and Kelly would compete against one another during the team's 2007 out-of-conference schedule to determine a

full-time starter for the Ohio Valley Conference schedule.

Both keepers have a style all their own. Kelly is a fiery competitor whose intensity is rarely matched. Selasky is a more reserved, soft-spoken and tactical leader.

"The number one thing we're looking for is if they're keeping the ball out of the back of the net," JSU coach Julie

Davis said. "Number two, how they communicate with the players in front of them and organize them in order to do their role and do it well."

Davis also hopes to use the keepers' performances in certain game situations to determine her starter.

"The third thing is how they deal with set pieces, such as corners and free kicks," Davis said. "It's the transition of play and how they respond to that change and how quickly they respond to it. Do they get the team organized quick enough? Is it too slow? Was it organized or not? Those are things we're going to start looking for."

Elizabeth Selasky

The first thing anyone will notice when contrasting the two goalkeepers is that their personalities are as much of a contrast as their styles of play.

"They're very different in the manner in which they communicate and the different personalities we have on the team will respond differently," Davis said. "Kate's very intense in her direction. Elizabeth is a little calmer in the back. That's just a difference in their personalities."

If you compare these two goalkeepers to prize fighters, then Elizabeth Selasky is JSU's version of Oscar De La Hoya.

She is soft-spoken, precise and extremely tactical.

Every move she makes on the pitch is thought out in detail, rarely allowing opponents room to take advantage of her.

"Elizabeth is a little better at the immediate shot stopping ability as far as reaction saves," Davis said. "She takes much more initiative to organize her back four quicker than Kate does."

When it comes to the senior from Maineville, Ohio, experience is not a question.

Selasky logged nearly 200 more minutes than Kelly in 2006, partly due to Kelly's recovery from off-season knee surgery.

That's where the differences in statistics end.

The fact that both keepers were nearly identical in every statistical category last season

Selasky and Kelly have been put through the gauntlet during fall practice, going through 7-on-7's and other drills where they must compete against one another.

To a degree, it's a trial by fire.

"It's working well," Selasky. "I love that type of atmosphere where I always have to be on my toes. I have to make minimal mistakes and fix those mistakes instantly or else I'm going to get booted down."

"And I don't want that to happen."

If Elizabeth Selasky is Oscar De La Hoya, then Kate Kelly would draw comparisons to a younger version of Mike Tyson.

She is outspoken, fiery and intense.

"I think I'm more in-your-face," Kelly said. "I yell at the girls a lot more and Elizabeth is more of a silent leader."

She doesn't just play the game; she attacks it head on.

And the fact that she's endured five different knee surgeries on her ACL in the

last three years shows you just how tough she is.

"I'm 120 percent ready," Kelly said. "I'm better than ever this year."

True, Selasky logged more minutes than Kelly in 2006, but Kelly bested her counterpart in both goals-against average and save percentage by a tenth of a point in each category.

"We're both talented goalkeepers," Kelly said. "We've been competing since my freshman year. It's good to have competition because it makes you do better. I think the team is well-off with either of us in net."

Kelly is no stranger to splitting time in net with Selasky. After Kelly returned to action last season, both keepers split games. Selasky played the first half and Kelly the second.

"It's going to be interesting to see how it works out this year," Kelly said. "Last year, we split time a lot and we did well doing that. She was a better first half keeper and I was a better second half keeper. It'll be interesting to see how it works out this year whether we're going to play whole games or split time."

While Selasky's strength is her shot stopping ability, Kelly's ability to go up and get a shot is what gives her an edge.

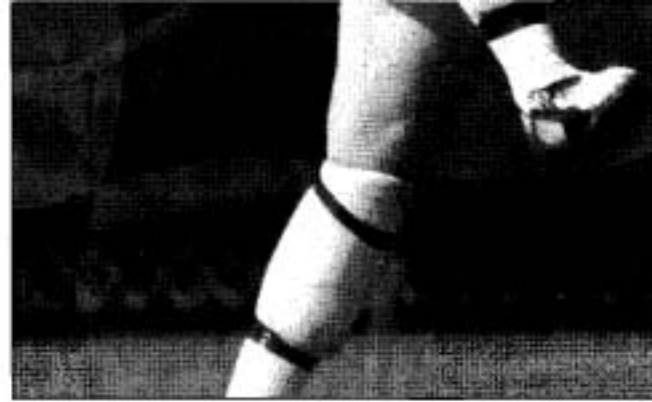
"Kate's very good on high balls and dealing with balls in the air because she's a lot tougher coming off her line



were nearly identical in every statistical category last season makes this competition interesting.

"I think it's good," Selasky said. "Competition will always bring out the best in people. It's good to compete against one another. We'll have competition at all times, so you can't let your guard down. Therefore, either of us will be ready to go at any time because we'll be prepared.

"It's going to be a close fight."



The starting goalie job for the JSU soccer team will be up for grabs this season. Vying for the position are Elizabeth Selasky (left) and Kate Kelly (right). Both photos courtesy of Steve Latham, JSU

balls and dealing with balls in the air because she's a lot tougher coming off her line to deal with those," Davis said.

Both keepers got off to rocky starts in their first exhibition match against UAB on August 19. Selasky gave up five goals in 30 minutes of play while Kelly gave up two in almost as much time in the Gamecocks 7-0 loss.

2007 JSU SOCCER SCHEDULE

- Sun 8/19/2007 at UAB (Exhibition) Birmingham, Ala. L 0-7
 Sat 8/25/2007 vs Auburn (Exhibition) Auburn, Ala. L 0-6
 Fri 8/31/2007 at Wright State / Wright State Fall Classic Dayton, Ohio 6:30 PM
 Sun 9/2/2007 vs Evansville / Wright State Fall Classic Dayton, Ohio 11:00 AM
 Fri 9/7/2007 vs Youngstown State / Gamecock Soccer Classic JACKSONVILLE 7:00 PM
 Sun 9/9/2007 vs The Citadel / Gamecock Soccer Classic JACKSONVILLE 3:00 PM
 Fri 9/14/2007 vs Kennesaw State JACKSONVILLE 7:00 PM
 Sun 9/16/2007 at South Alabama Mobile, Ala. 1:00 PM
 Fri 9/21/2007 vs Troy JACKSONVILLE 3:00 PM
 Sun 9/23/2007 at Arkansas Fayetteville, Ark. 1:00 PM
 Fri 9/28/2007 *vs Murray State JACKSONVILLE 7:00 PM
 Sun 9/30/2007 *vs UT-Martin JACKSONVILLE 1:00 PM
 Fri 10/5/2007 *at Samford University Birmingham, Ala. 7:00 PM
 Fri 10/12/2007 *at Morehead State Morehead, Ky. 6:00 PM
 Sun 10/14/2007 *at Eastern Kentucky Richmond, Ky. 12:00 PM
 Fri 10/19/2007 *vs Austin Peay JACKSONVILLE 7:00 PM
 Sun 10/21/2007 *vs Tennessee Tech JACKSONVILLE 1:00 PM
 Fri 10/26/2007 *at Southeast Missouri State Cape Girardeau, Mo. 7:00 PM
 Sun 10/28/2007 *at Eastern Illinois Charleston, Ill. 1:00 PM

*Denotes Conference Games

2007 season preview: Back to the playoffs or bust

By Jared Gravette
 Staff Sports Writer

The soccer team will take the field in 2007 with a renewed confidence that a fresh start always brings.

Last year saw the Gamecocks finish with a 5-11-2 record and miss the conference tournament for the first time since joining the Ohio Valley Conference.

JSU enters the season without several key players from last year's squad. Co-captains Daniela Malta and Christina Balint are gone, along with several members of last year's freshman class, such as Lauren Deppe and Erica West, who logged significant minutes last season.

Despite the losses, JSU brings back three seniors for the 2007 season. Defender Jessica Scerbo and midfielder/forward Courtney Moore have the experience and talent to make a big splash in the OVC this year. Goalkeeper Elizabeth Selasky also returns for her senior season and is expected to compete with junior Kate Kelly for the starting gig in goal.

After making the conference tournament in each of their first two seasons at JSU, getting back there will be one of the major goals for this year's senior class.

"In my opinion it's kind of unacceptable for us not to make the tournament. We should be in the tournament every year," Selasky said. "I expect us to at least make it to the semi-finals every year."

Said Scerbo: "Everybody needs to want to get to the tournament. We have a really good team this year. As long as we work hard and everybody keeps their minds on

playing and getting to the tournament, we should get there."

The Gamecocks also have juniors Kristi Pereira and Elsa Kurlychek back in the fold, but the majority of the team is made up of freshmen and sophomores.

JSU will put one of the youngest teams in school history on the field this year. Nine freshmen and six sophomores make up the majority of the 21-player roster. The performance of these underclassmen could make or break the Gamecocks in 2007.

"We have a pretty young team," Moore said. "We're looking for a lot of them to start and carry us through to the tournament. I think we have a lot of talent. If we all get on the same page, I think that we can be in the top three."

"One of our goals is to really break in some of our younger players into our system and our style of play," said head coach Julie Davis.

"Right now the ones who are stepping up - and the ones that we were expecting to step up - are Alyshia Madison, Kaitlyn MacLellan, Kim Kimmel, Sara Neibuhr and Debbie Matich. They have all done a good job. They are so competitive. They have really come in and made a statement early on and have really gained the respect of the upperclassmen."

Samford, Morehead State, Southeast Missouri (SEMO) and Eastern Illinois enter the 2007 season as the top four teams in the OVC, but the talent gap may be much smaller than many people might think.

"We beat SEMO, who won the

JULIE DAVIS



- Head coach, soccer
- 3rd season
- 13-21-4 record
- "My expectations for this team are for them to gain respect within the conference."

championship tournament. We lost to Samford on an own goal. We lost to Eastern, and the second goal was an own goal. We lost to Austin Peay and UT-Martin by a goal. We lost to Morehead by a goal, and Murray State we beat. Everything now is by a one goal difference in the big scheme of things, and that makes the OVC anybody's ballgame and anybody's championship trophy," Davis said.

The Gamecocks enter the season ranked seventh in the preseason poll, with the ultimate goal of breaking into the top three in conference.

"My expectations for this team are for them to gain respect within the conference and to put ourselves in a position that is respectable compared to the last two years. Respectable means in a much higher ranking position whether we're regular season champs, OVC champs or in the top three. So, our goal is to be in the top three," Davis said.

JSU opens the regular season at Wright State in Dayton, Ohio Aug. 31.

Old Crowe, new tricks

By **Jered Staubs**
Staff Sports Writer

Don't expect to see the run n' shoot offense, but there will be some noticeable changes in Jack Crowe's offense this fall.

"People are going to see this team and think that Jack Crowe isn't coaching this team," he said.

A run-first mentality has been evident at all of Crowe's coaching positions since he began his coaching career as the offensive coordinator at Oxford High School in 1970.

Three years at Clemson; three conference rushing titles. Four years at Auburn; three conference rushing titles and a Heisman Trophy for Bo Jackson. And a conference rushing title at Arkansas.

The list goes on and on.

"There's no two ways about it," Crowe said. "Back at the beginning of my history, whoever ran the football better won the game."

Crowe's extensive background has seen a bevy of talent at the running back position. He coached four backs in college who became All-Pros in the NFL. JSU has churned out 1,000-yard rushers like clockwork under his guidance.

This year the cupboard is not quite so stacked at running back. It's not that there's not talent - Crowe says projected starter Daniel Jackson is showing signs in practice - but there is very little experience running the football.

There is no lack of experience or talent in the passing game, however. Crowe considers Taurean Rhetta a potential NFL player and had high praise for the rest of his receiving

corps.

The two quarterbacks who will share snaps are Cedric Johnson - who owns the state of Georgia's high school passing TD record - and Matt Hardin - who owned the same record in Florida until it was broken by Tim Tebow.

Crowe says he's always been open to the passing game, but his personnel dictated that his teams keep coming back to the tried-and-true method of running the ball the majority of the time.

"Part of it is system, but a bigger part is realizing what you've got and playing to the personnel you've got."

So with the influx of passing talent and consecutive disappointing 6-5 seasons, Crowe says a shift in philosophy is in order.

"I think we've got to get ahead of the defense again. We came in, won the league the first few years, and - it sounds arrogant, but it's the honest truth - people started imitating what we were doing in the running game," Crowe said.

"We've gotten to where we are a little too known, so we've got to create a different offensive approach."

The shift seems logical, perhaps even mandatory. But Crowe says that while there will be obvious changes, he will not entirely abandon what has made his teams so successful in the past.

"I think people will play us to run it, and that will open up some opportunities. We're going to seek balance a little more, but we are not going to tip the scale [and become pass-first]."

Considering his team is only 3-23 in games in which they were out-rushed under Crowe, JSU supporters would hope not.



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