ALUMNI PROFILE

This Doug's for you! Super Bowl bound

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE
Review Staff Writer

It's been a strange but fruitful season for Doug Williams, Washington Redskins quarterback.

When he signed with the Skins two seasons ago, he was penciled in as the back-up for Jay Schroeder. In his first season with the Skins, the former Grambling star threw just one pass.

This past season, he got the chance to strut his stuff when Schroeder was injured. Then the NFL players went on strike and Doug returned to the sidelines when Schroeder mended.

However, Schroeder faltered late in the season, and head coach Joe Gibbs called Doug's number to start in the playoffs.

Two solid performances against Chicago and Minnesota helped Williams take his team to Super Bowl XXII.

History was made. America got to see the first black quarterback take an NFL team to the championship game.

For those naysayers and scoffers, all the illogical myths surrounding black QBs in the NFL were obliterated.

No more cracks about blacks not being smart enough to lead a championship team.

No more questions about reading defenses.

No more notions about black QBs not being able to perform under pressure.

The road to the Super Bowl was especially sweet for Doug. It has been a struggle.

Detractors point at Williams' subpar performances with Tampa Bay in four playoff games (27 for 85 passing). They especially remember his 2-13 passing day in the 1979 NFL title game when the Bucs lost 9-0 to the Los Angeles Rams.

Never mind that Tampa Bay wasn't an exceptional team. Never mind that without Doug at the helm, Tampa Bay would never have made the playoffs, much less gotten as close as one game away from the Super Bowl.

That's past history. In the late '80s, Williams has put all doubts to rest. With a fine offensive line, receivers, runners and stingy defense, Doug has proved that you win with good people around you.

In Tampa Bay, he took all of the blame for their downside performances.

In Washington and around the league, he didn't get enough of the credit for the Skins' return to the Super Bowl.

Nevertheless, one cannot refute his playoff performances.

It was very evident in the NFL championship game as Washington prevailed 17-10.

Doug didn't have one of his better days.

He constantly overthrew his receivers, completing 9 of 26 passes (14 for 17 during one stretch) for just 119 yards.

But -- he threw two touchdown passes, the last one being the game winner to Gary Clark.

Doug did the job when it *had* to be done.

Despite having an off day, Doug didn't panic.

In a lot of cases, he chose to throw the ball away rather than risk an interception.

Aside from the overthrows, Williams didn't do anything to give the game away, which enabled Washington to stay with their game plan and be in position to win.

The winning score was set up when Williams fired a 43-yard strike to Clark on a third down play. Moments later,

Williams improvised as Clark altered his route and Doug threw a Dwight Gooden type fastball between three Vikings' defenders in the end zone.

The original play called for Clark to run a corner pattern.

But the Vikings secondary rotated their zone to take that away and Clark ran a curl to the inside.

Doug found Clark for the score.

Clark confessed that he didn't know how Doug was able to spot him. And it's been said that black QBs can't improvise and read defenses!

In Washington's 21-17 playoff victory over the Bears, Doug ran an efficient operation, completing 14 of 29 passes for 207 yards and a touchdown. In the face of fierce weather (a wind-chill factor of 5 degrees), Williams rallied his team from an early 14-0 deficit to tie the game by the end of the first half.

The tieing TD came on an 18-yard toss to Clint Didier.

In that seven play drive that consumed 58 seconds, Williams completed five passes.

Publicly, Williams won't say that there is any special significance with him being the first black QB to start in a Super Bowl. He does, however, see himself as a role model for future black QBs in the NFL.

With Randall Cunningham (Eagles) and Warren Moon (Oilers) having already established themselves as pros, Williams hopes that black college quarterbacks such as Rodney Peete (Southern California) and Don McPherson (Syracuse) will get a genuine opportunity to play quarterback in the NFL.

It's ironic that Doug's time in the spotlight came right after two significant events -- Martin Luther King Jr.'s national holiday, and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder's remarks about blacks being bred to be superior athletes.

"Clark confessed that he didn't know how Doug was able to spot him. And it's been said that black QBs can't improvise and read defenses!"

He won't address "The Greek's" comments, but hints that with a couple of more seasons, he'll write a book which will provide his insights on his bittersweet NFL career.

By the time this article is published, the Super Bowl will be history.

But win or lose, the world will know that Doug Williams is a survivor and a winner in the game of life.

The opportunity to quarterback a Super Bowl team couldn't have happened for a more deserving person.

Like the T-shirts around D.C. say -- Doug Williams is the epitome of a touch of class.

Doug -- we'll always be in your corner.

Williams doesn't scramble as often as he did with Tampa Bay. but when it's necessary, he still picks up the yards (photo by Craig T. Greenlee).

MILLER LITE CONFERENCE UPDATE

Brought to you by Miller Lite. The proud sponsor of the CIAA, MEAC, and SWAC conferences.

It's about that time again -- tournament time. And one of the longest running basketball events in the land will gather for the 43rd time in just a few short weeks. Though last year's controversial and exciting affair will be a hard act to follow, the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association's 1988 basketball tournament, held Feb. 24-27 in Norfolk, Virginia, figures to put 15-0 North Carolina Central to the ultimate test -- a conference full of upset-hungry wolves. The Eagles established themselves as one of the teams to beat in the CIAA when they pulled out a key 49-48 victory over Southern Division pre-season favorite, Winston-Salem State. At press time, NCCU was ranked number one in all of Division II basketball.

Meanwhile, thirteenth-ranked Norfolk State, 13-2, and sixth-ranked Virginia Union, 12-2, will clash later this month to determine who's top dog in the North.

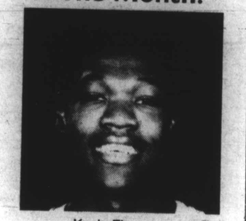
In women's play, the Hampton Lady Pirates are number two in Division II with a 17-0 record.

MEAC Tourney Gets New Format -- The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference has announced that their first round tournament games will be held at various campus sites instead of at the Greensboro Coliseum. MEAC Commissioner, Ken Free, said the move was to promote better attendence at often one-sided first-round games.

N.C. A&T, currently 10-1 and ranked second in the Sheridan Poll, is the perennial favorite in the men's race. The Aggies, who will go after their seventh-straight MEAC crown March 4-5 in Greensboro, N.C., face key rematches with Florida A&M and Howard University.

SWAC Tourney Set For Baton Rouge -- Last year Kevin Florent of Southern University took over with 33 points and helped the Jaguars win the Southwestern Athletic Conference. The scenario is looking much the same for the Jaguars in '88, as they share the conference lead with Texas Southern at 4-1 and await a decisive rematch. The SWAC gathers March 3-5 in Baton Rouge.

Lite Beer Athlete of The Month.



Kevin Florent

Black College Sports Review is proud to announce that Southern University senior forward Kevin Florent has been selected as Miller Lite's Black College Player of the Month.

Averaging 21.9 points a game, Florent has led the senior-laden Jaguars to a perfect 4-0 mark in the Southwestern Athletic Conference.

The 6-5 Lutcher, La., native has developed into a total package according to Southern's head coach, Ben Jobe.

In past years, Florent was widely known for his vicious slam dunks and acrobatic leaping ability. Now, he's gaining fame as a complete ballplayer with improved rebounding, ballhandling and defense.

"He's learned to use his great athletic ability on defense this year," said Jobe. "He's really playing good, solid defense for us."

In an early-season 98-96 win over Centenary, Florent exploded for 38 points. Wins over Bellhaven, Rice and New Orleans produced very similar results -- Florent had 29-point performances each time out.

But perhaps his most memorable performance came last year when Florent brought home the Southwestern Athletic Conference bacon for the Jaguars. He scored 33 points in Southern's romp over Grambling State in the SWAC championship game.

Miller Lite honors Kevin Florent as the Black College Player of the Month for February.

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