

Breitenstein Listed As Probable

Written by Mike Kelly
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The Wofford College football team suffered its first loss of the season last Saturday at Georgia Southern in a top-25, first-place match up in

Statesboro, Ga. The Terriers, who are ranked No.9 in the FCS Coaches Poll and No.8 in The Sports Network Poll, came up short, and now find themselves in a second-place tie with Appalachian State, this week's opponent, in the Southern Conference standings. And it's a must-win game for both teams.

The Terriers also find themselves playing at Kidd Brewer Stadium, where they've struggled in recent years. Wofford hasn't won in Boone since 2002 (a 26-19 win), and they've been outscored 113-37 in their last two visits---which includes a 43-13 blowout loss in 2010.

And the Terriers, who lead the nation in rushing and are ranked eighth nationally in total offense, are missing their biggest component---running back Eric Breitenstein.

The Watauga County native suffered a high ankle sprain against the Eagles in last Saturday's 17-9 loss. He's been wearing a boot all week, and hasn't practiced. And according to Wofford coach Mike Ayers, Breitenstein was listed as probable on Thursday for Saturday's match up with the Mountaineers.

"We have our usual bumps and bruises," Ayers said during his weekly Southern Conference teleconference call. "But I think Eric will be fine. He's been doing the treatment and he's in a boot right now, but hopefully he'll get to practice in the latter part of the week. He's been doing what he's been doing for the last four-and-a-half years, so he knows the game plan. We have to get him healthy."

"He's a terrific young man, and he's tearing up the league," ASU coach Jerry Moore said. "He sees the field so well, and he's so strong, especially at the line of scrimmage. He moves the pile, and he can break the long run. I think he's stronger and faster than he's been. He's a terrific football player."

Breitenstein leads the Southern Conference and is ranked second nationally in rushing with 995 yards. He is also second in the SoCon in rushing touchdowns with nine. He's also ranked fourth in the SoCon in scoring with 54 points.

Breitenstein was named the SoCon Offensive Player of the Week, The Sports Network National Offensive Player of the Week, and the NCAA FCS National Offensive Player of the Week on October 1.

"He's a good player," Ayers said. "God blessed him with good size, quickness and good speed. He's got great vision and balance."

Breitenstein has had his moments against ASU. He rambled for a career-high (at the time) 157 yards in a 70-24 loss at Kidd Brewer Stadium during his freshman year in 2008, and he ran for 173 yards on 33 carries in a 28-14 win last year in Spartanburg, S.C.

Breitenstein, who set the SoCon single-game rushing record with a 321-yard effort against Elon on September 29, is just 438 yards shy of the Wofford's all-time rushing record of 5,128 yards set by Shawn Graves from 1989-92. Breitenstein has 4,690 yards in his career, and he set the single-season rushing record at the school last fall with 1,639 yards.

Ironically, that single-game rushing record against Elon, left him just two yards shy of the school record of 323 yards amassed by Graves against Lenior-Rhyne in 1990.

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Breitenstein is a strong candidate for the Walter Payton Award, which goes to the best offensive player in the country at the FCS level.

Defensively, the Terriers are ranked 13th national on defense in yards allowed and they're giving up a little more than two touchdowns a game.

"Mike is one of the best coaches in the country," Moore said. "His players fly around on the field, and they're always around the ball. They have one of the defenses at our (FCS) levels." All-conference left tackle Calvin Cantrell of the Terriers suffered a concussion in last week's loss against Georgia Southern and will not play Saturday. For ASU, Ronald Blair (thigh) and Michael Frazier (arm) are listed as probable for Saturday's game; Deuce Robinson (knee), who has practiced lightly this week, and wide receiver Taco Sumler (knee) are both listed as questionable. Defensive back Roger Walker (illness) is day-to-day, offensive lineman Alex Acey, defensive back Chris Shaffer (illness), and linebacker Will Smith (illness) will not play against the Terriers.

This is the 29th meeting between the schools. ASU leads the all-time series 17-11, but the Terriers beat the Mountaineers 28-14 at Gibbs Stadium last season.

Photo Courtesy: Eric Breitenstein, SoCon Athletics