The Lenoir-Rhyne Football Team will face a familiar opponent this Saturday in Carson-Newman as the NCAA Division II Playoffs move into the second round. Kickoff at Burke-Tarr Stadium is set for Noon. Lenoir-Rhyne (9-2) enters the game on an eight-game winning streak while Carson-Newman is 8-2 on the year and has won its past six games as well.

L-R defeated Fort Valley State (8-4), 21-6, last Saturday at home in the First Round of the NCAA Division II Playoffs in Hickory, N.C.

The appearance and win in last week's postseason game was Lenoir-Rhyne's first in 50 years. In 1962, L-R finished 11-1 on the season and advanced all the way to the NAIA National Championship Game.

The winner of the South Atlantic Conference showdown between the Bears and the Eagles will face the winner of the West Alabama (9-3) and Valdosta State (8-2) contest in the national quarterfinals on Saturday, December 1.

Carson-Newman (378.5 ypg) and Lenoir-Rhyne (371.8 ypg) are ranked first and second, respectively, in rushing in NCAA Division II entering this weekend's game.

L-R's rushing attack is led by sophomore halfback Jarrod Spears (Bunnlevel, N.C.) and sophomore fullback Isaiah Whitaker (Salisbury, N.C.).

Spears has a team-leading 856 yards rushing and eight scores with a 13.4 yards-per-carry average while Whitaker is second on the squad in rushing yards (760) to go along with four scores. Both players earned all-league honors this fall.

Senior and all-conference quarterback Reuben Haynes (Commerce, Ga.) provides a steady hand behind center. Haynes has 467 yards through the air and 588 yards on the ground in addition to 16 total touchdowns.

Paving the way for the Bears up front is senior offensive lineman Kaleb Myrick (Loganville, Ga.). Myrick was the co-winner of the 2012 Jacobs Blocking Trophy, given annually to the top offensive lineman in the South Atlantic Conference.

On defense, L-R is led by a pair of first-team All-SAC linebackers: senior Demetrius Green (Cedartown, Ga.) and sophomore Tanner Botts (Lawrenceville, Ga).

Green and Botts are first and second on the team in tackles with 98 and 88 takedowns, respectively, while Botts has 11.5 tackles for a loss, four sacks, three forced fumbles and a pair of interceptions this year.

The Bears special teams' unit is headed up by Spears, junior Michael Green (Kingsland, Ga.) and senior placekicker Zach Neumann (Mechanicsville Md.).

Spears averages 31.5 yards per kickoff return while Green was named an all-league honoree as both a defensive back and return specialist for the second straight year. Neumann, meanwhile, has kicked 13 field goals this year and has set a school record for points in a season for a kicker with 83.

The Eagles lead the all-time series with the Bears, 42-11, and won earlier this season by a 47-23 score on Saturday, September 15, in Jefferson City, Tenn. L-R, the 2012 SAC Champions, has not lost since the Carson-Newman setback.

Lenoir-Rhyne is now 6-3-1 all-time in the postseason with its victory over Fort Valley State last Saturday.

Photo Courtesy: Tanner Botts, L-R Athletics