

L-R To Host Carson-Newman In Rematch

Written by Staff Reports

Saturday, 30 November 2013 00:00

The Lenoir-Rhyne Football Team (10-1) will face Carson-Newman (10-2) at home on Saturday in the Second Round of the 2013 NCAA Division II Playoffs. Kickoff at Moretz Stadium is set for Noon.

The Bears, ranked No. 13 in NCAA Division II, will put their 10-game winning streak on the line against the Eagles. The winner will face either North Alabama (9-2) or UNC Pembroke (9-1) in the national quarterfinals next Saturday.

Carson-Newman comes into the game ranked No. 18 in the nation and riding a three-game winning streak. Carson-Newman defeated Newberry by a 37-27 score in the first round of the playoffs last Saturday at home.

The two teams will be meeting for the fourth time in the last two years. Earlier this season, the Bears shut down the Eagles by a 37-3 score on Saturday, November 2, in Hickory, N.C.

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Carson-Newman and Lenoir-Rhyne will also be meeting in the second round of the playoffs for the second straight year. Last season, the Eagles prevailed by a 38-35 score in Jefferson City, Tenn. All-time, Carson-Newman leads the series by a 43-12 count.

Lenoir-Rhyne is the top rushing team in NCAA Division II at 376.9 yards per game and is led by junior halfback Jarrod Spears (Bunnlevel, N.C.) and junior fullback Isaiah Whitaker (Salisbury, N.C.) with 711 and 704 yards, respectively.

The defense is anchored by senior free safety Michael Green (Kingsland, Ga.). Green, the 2013 South Atlantic Conference Defensive Player Of The Year, leads the conference in interceptions with seven to go along with 64 tackles.

In addition, junior linebacker Tanner Botts (Lawrenceville, Ga.) is the team's top tackler with 104 takedowns while junior defensive lineman Blake Baker (Bethlehem, N.C.) has a SAC-leading 10.5 quarterback sacks. All three players earned first-team all-league honors and led a unit which is ranked third in scoring defense (13.8 ppg) and eighth in rushing defense (85.9 ypg) on a national scale.

Carson-Newman averages nearly 500 yards of total offense (491.9 ypg) and is ranked fourth in NCAA Division II in rushing at 350.9 yards per game. The ground game is led by running back

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Brandon Baker (999 yards) and quarterback De'Andre Thomas, who has accumulated 2,585 yards of total offense and 27 total scores including 19 rushing.

Lenoir-Rhyne, the three-time defending SAC Champions (2011-13), is having its best season since an 11-1 mark in 1962 when the Bears advanced to the NAIA National Championship game. L-R has not played this late in the season since December 1, 1962, when Lenoir-Rhyne prevailed over Northern State (S.D.) by a 20-7 score at home in the NAIA Eastern Playoff game.

Photo Courtesy: Tanner Botts, L-R Athletics