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Hornet Football 2009 Outlook

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Coming off the team?s first losing season since 2004, the Delaware State Hornets look to regain the championship swagger the team had just two years ago. A belief in sports is that a team can sometimes learn more from a loss than a win. Last season, the Hornets suffered three losses of six points or less (two in Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference play) and will look to use those experiences to move to the top of the MEAC once again.

The Al Lavan era continues at DSU, entering its sixth season. Lavan (36-23 overall, 34-22 MEAC) returns 38 lettermen from a team that finished tied for second in the 2008 MEAC Standings. Lavan and the DSU coaching staff will have some key holes to fill, including the team?s leading passer, leading rusher, leading receiver and four of the squad?s top five leading tacklers from a year ago.

Overall, 11 starters (6 offense, 5 defense) return for Delaware State, including four of the team?s five starting offensive linemen and five members of a defense unit that finished ranked No. 13 in the nation in total defense (288.36 ypg).

Quarterbacks
The Hornets will look to replace a four-year starter in Vashon Winton, who compiled a 33-14 record (25-6 MEAC) as DSU?s quarterback. Anthony Glaud (6-3, 215, r-Jr) and Nick Elko (6-2, 200, r-Fr) will battle for the starting quarterback position.

Glaud has the most experience in the DSU huddle among the two quarterbacks, completing 47-of-75 pass attempts for 523 yards and two touchdowns last season. The Sicklerville, N.J., native compiled a 122.0 efficiency rating during his first season with the Hornets. Glaud had a solid spring, throwing for 120 yards on 8-of-11 passing, including one touchdown during the first half of the annual Red/White Spring Game. Elko, a highly-touted quarterback out of the state of Maryland, redshirted during the 2008 season and will use the knowledge gained last season towards making a major push to become the DSU starting signal caller. The Odenton, Md., product completed 8-of-18 passing for 66 yards in the spring.

Micah Brown (6-2, 200, Jr.) was returned to quarterback this summer after competing at linebacker in 2008.

Wide Receivers
The 2009 receiving corps returns three starters from last season, including Larrone Moore (6-0, 185, Jr) and Erick Jones (6-3, 200, r-Sr). Moore grabbed 32 passes for 319 yards and one touchdown. The team?s fastest player, Moore averaged 29.0 yards-per-game and 10.0 yards-

per-catch. For his career, Moore has tallied 471 yards on 45 receptions and one touchdown. Jones made 13 catches for 167 yards and a team-high four touchdowns. The Washington, D.C., native averaged 15.2 yards-per-game and 12.8 yards-per-catch. Moore has 17 catches for 202 yards and four touchdowns during his three seasons at DSU. Jones registered 84 receiving yards on four catches, including a touchdown during 2009 Spring Game. Zacharri Charles (5-11, 185, Sr) started the first eight games of the 2008 season before suffering an injury. The Winter Haven, Fla., native registered 13 catches for 122 yards, averaging 15.2 yards-per-game and 8.4 yards-per-catch.

Sophomore Darius Jackson (5-10, 185) will look to be in the mix this season. The Quincy, Fla., native recorded 18 catches for 300 yards and one touchdown during his first season at Delaware State. Jackson recorded a game-high six catches (63 yards) in the spring. Donnell Dixon (5-10, 175, r-Fr), Travis Tarpley (5-7, 170, r-Fr) and Justin Wilson (6-1, 160, r-Fr) will compete for playing time.

Tight Ends
The Hornets will look to replace tight end Jahmel Bashir (7 rec., 49 yds., 1 TD) with Barrington Tolliver (6-2, 230, r-Sr.) and newcomers Kristian Johnson (6-3, 255, Fr) and Ryan Langdon (6-4, 235, Fr). Tolliver was a wide receiver and special teams standout in 2008. Johnson and Langdon are products of Philadelphia, Pa., and are expected to make an immediate impact on the DSU passing game. Johnson joined the Delaware State roster as a mid-year signee and took part in the team?s annual Red/White Spring Game. Langdon caught 14 passes for 272 yards during his senior year at Father Judge High School, earning Philadelphia All-Catholic League First Team selection and All-City Honorable Mention honors in 2008.

Running Backs
Delaware State will also be looking to fill the void left by the graduation of running backs Chris Strother (577 yards) and Kareem Jones (407 yards). Redshirt sophomore Jaashawn Jones (6-1, 225, r-So) and Jason Randall (5-11, 195, Jr) are poised to take over the role as starting tailback. Jones proved to be a key short-yardage back, scoring three touchdowns on 18 carries for 31 yards in 2008. Jones scored the go-ahead touchdown during the Hornet?s 34-28 comeback victory over Norfolk State (Nov. 15, 2008). Randall appeared in four games last season as a reserve running back. The Bowie, Md., native averaged 4.2 yards-per-carry during this year?s Red/White Spring Game.

The Hornets added Tahree McQueen (5-10, 200, r-So ? transfer from Cincinnati) to bring more depth to the running back position. McQueen did not see action with the Bearcats, but comes to DSU as an offensive threat. McQueen was an AP all-state quarterback at Eastside HS in Paterson, N.J.

Newcomers Nick Williams (fr.) and James Rosseau (fr.) will also battle for playing time this season.

Offensive Line
The Hornets return three starters to the offensive line. Kellen Kemp (6-3, 315, Sr), Nick Richmond (6-3, 300, r-Sr) and Mike Maloney (6-6, 290, Sr) combined for 44 starts last season. The 2008 DSU offensive line guided Delaware State to 1,501 yards on the ground. The Hornets will be looking to replace 2008 Second Team All-MEAC selection Adrian Brown.

Seniors Steven Steinbacher (6-5, 295), Marcus Ponder (6-3, 330), junior Brandon Purnsley (6-3, 300) along with sophomores Thomas Threadgill (6-5, 275) and Nail Muradymov (6-7, 330)

give Delaware State an extremely deep offensive line. The Hornets will have newcomers Aaron Boyd (6-5, 325, Fr) and Darryl Hicks (6-4, 300, Jr) in the mix.

Defensive Line
Despite the loss of Alimayo Wilder, Ronn Spinner, Jr., and Akiel Russell, the Delaware State defensive line has no shortage of talent and experience. Andre Caroll (6-2, 260, r-Jr), Fabian Dunn (6-4, 275, r-Sr), Tyron Hurst (6-2, 295, Sr) and Joe Mendes (5-11, 220, Sr) return for the Hornets. Caroll appeared in all 11 games (eight starts) last season, registering 43 total tackles (12 unassisted), including two tackles for loss. Dunn tallied 23 total tackles (13 unassisted) with 1.5 tackles for loss and one quarterback hurry in 11 contests. Hurst played in eight games (missing three due to injury), notching 10 total tackles (four unassisted) with four tackles for loss. Mendes led all Hornets with 3.5 sacks, recording 21 total tackles (11 unassisted) with three quarterback hurries.

Braheim Haywood (6-2, 250, r-Jr) and David Izebere (6-5, 285, r-Fr), along with newcomer George Bansah (6-1, 265, Fr) will join the fold.

Linebackers
The Hornets return starter Mike Gable (6-2, 210, r-Sr) to the linebacking corps this season. Gable, a converted defensive back, registered 40 total tackles (15 unassisted) with 6.5 tackles for loss. The Bel Air, Md., native also was credited with one forced fumble, his first-career interception and two quarterback hurries in 2008. DSU will look to fill the void left by the departure of middle linebacker Kevin Conner and Josh Pope. Conner led the Hornets with 95 total tackles, three fumble recoveries, one sack and four and one-half tackles for loss. Pope finished the 2008 season with 32 total tackles (15 unassisted) with two sacks and one forced fumble.

A group of talented linebackers will continue to provide depth, led by junior Quentin Ferguson (5-11, 190), senior Ahmad Harris (6-0, 230) and redshirt senior Eric Sewell (5-11, 245).

The Hornet coaching staff is hoping for contributions from Keith Hunt (6-0, 220, So.), Salahuddin Gadson (5-11, 225, r-So), John Sutton (6-1, 250, Jr), Marquis Spann (6-2, 200, So) and Aaron Richardson (6-1, 220, Fr).

Secondary
Three of the four starting defensive backs return for the Hornets. Senior Avery Grant (6-0, 180) returns as the team?s leading tackler and anchors a defensive backfield that ranked No. 5 in the nation in pass defense (143.18 ypg). Grant started at strong safety in 10 games last season, registering 68 total tackles (34 unassisted) with 8.5 tackles for loss. The Brooklyn, N.Y., native recorded two sacks along with one forced fumble and three pass breakups. Joining Grant in the defensive backfield will be free safety Jerome Strums (6-0, 190, r-Sr). Strums started every game for the Hornets in 2008, tallying 40 total tackles (20 unassisted). The Windsor, Conn., native picked off a team-high three passes last season, including the game-winning interception in overtime versus Florida A&M (Sept. 4, 2008). Also returning to the Delaware State defensive backfield will be cornerback Francis Adjei (6-2, 175, r-Jr). Adjei also picked off three passes with the second-best pass breakup total on the team last season (8). The Silver Spring, Md., product registered 40 total tackles (32 unassisted).

Gerald Bouknight (5-11, 190, Jr) and Greg Ligon (5-9, 180, r-Sr) are expected to battle for the final starting spot in this year?s secondary. Bouknight appeared in nine games last season, registering three tackles and one pass breakup. Ligon did not see action in 2008 but has been

a member of the Hornets since 2005.

B.J. Conely (5-8, 175, r-Sr), Calvin Miner (5-11, 185, So) and Tavis Tabb (6-2, 190, r-So) will battle for playing time this season.

Kicking Game
Redshirt senior Riley Flickinger (5-9, 240) returns for the second-straight season as the Hornets? place kicker. The Gresham, Ore., native converted 10-of-20 field goal attempts and averaged 56.0 yards-per-kickoff last year. Flickinger?s 10 field goals were the fifth-most in a single season at Delaware State. The 5-foot-9 senior also converted 24-of-25 extra point attempts in 2008.

Senior Nick Lochner (6-1, 160) enters his second season as DSU?s punter. One of the top punters in the MEAC, Lochner averaged 39.2 yards-per-punt. The Webster, N.Y., native registered 54 punts for 2,118 yards with 22 punts placed inside the 20-yard line. With 12 50(+)-yard punts, Lochner finished the 2008 season with the fourth-best punting average at DSU in a single season (39.2).

Kick/Punt Returns
DSU returns its top two return men from last season. Larrone Moore and Zacharri Charles led all Hornets in kick returns as Moore averaged 21.8 yards-per-return and Charles averaged 20.8 yards-per-return. Moore returned six kicks for 131 yards and a long of 60 yards. Charles made a team-best 16 kick returns for 332 yards and a long of 40 yards. Entering the fray will be Darius Jackson, who will look to give the Hornets a variety of options in the return game.

Charles will also be looked upon to be the main punt returner in 2009. Charles returned three punts last season for 20 yards and will look to fill the hole left by the departure of Brandon Hudson (13 returns for 112 yards).

The Schedule
The Hornets began the 2009 season with a Sept. 5 trip to Tallahassee, Fla., where they lost 21-12 to the Florida A&M Rattlers. In the first MEAC opening season in the DSU career of Head Coach Al Lavan, the Hornets were competitive but were plagued by costly mental errors throughout the game. There were, however, several positives -- including DSU quarterback Anthony Glaud's completion of 17 of 32 passes for 188 yards and one 30-yard touch down pass to Sacharri Charles.
Following an open date, the Hornets will then travel to Newark, Del., for an historic regular-season battle on Sept. 19 with the University of Delaware Blue Hens. DSU will host a Hornets Fan Center from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on the practice field adjacent to the UD Stadium.
The Week Three game will be the first-ever, regular-season meeting between the state?s two Division I schools. DSU and UD met for the first time in 2007, facing each other in the first round of the FCS Playoffs (Nov. 23, 2007). The Blue Hens finished last season with a 4-8 record (2-6 CAA).
DSU continues its three-game road swing to start the season with a Sept. 26 game at Hampton. The Hornets will be looking to avenge a 17-14 loss to the Pirates last season (Oct. 4, 2008) at Alumni Stadium. Hampton (6-5, 5-3 MEAC last year) will host Delaware State in the 35th-meeting all-time between the two schools and the first-ever with new HU Head Coach Donovan Rose.

Delaware State?s home opener will take place on Oct. 10 as the Hornets host the Bethune-

Cookman Wildcats. Coming off a 26-20 win in Daytona Beach, Fla., last season (Oct. 11, 2008), the Hornets own a 20-13 advantage in the all-time series history with B-CU. DSU has won four-straight against Bethune-Cookman. B-CU finished 8-3 (5-3 MEAC) last year.

DSU hits the road the following week, traveling to Ann Arbor, Mich., in the team?s first-ever meeting with the Michigan Wolverines (Oct. 17). With a capacity of 106,201 Michigan Stadium will be the site of the largest crowd to ever witness a Delaware State football game. Michigan is coming off a 3-9 record (2-6 Big Ten) in 2008. The game will mark DSU?s first-ever game with a member of the Big Ten Conference.

Morgan State is Delaware State?s opponent for Homecoming 2009. The Hornets host the Bears on Oct. 24 and will look to rebound from a 20-3 loss at Morgan State last year (Oct. 25, 2008). MSU holds a 28-22 edge in the series history with Delaware State winning three of the last four meetings.

The Hornets return to the road for a two-game swing away from Alumni Stadium, starting with an Oct. 31 outing at South Carolina State (10-3, 8-0 MEAC in 2008). The defending MEAC Champions downed DSU last season (23-17 on Nov. 1) and hold a 23-15 advantage in the series history. A week later, Delaware State will travel to Winston-Salem, N.C., to take on Winston-Salem State (Nov. 7). The Hornets own a 4-3-1 record versus the Rams, following last season?s 27-26 loss on Nov. 8, 2008. The last meetings two between DSU and WSSU have been decided by a combined four points.

Two-straight home games close out the 2009 season. On Nov. 14, the Norfolk State Spartans come to Dover. DSU has won six-straight games versus NSU, including last season?s 34-28 comeback victory at Dick Price Stadium (Nov. 15, 2008). The Hornets trailed by 21-points late in the first half before rallying for a six-point win over the Spartans. The Hornets close out the year with their traditional meeting with the Howard Bison on Nov. 21. Last season, DSU defeated Howard, 10-6, on Nov. 22, 2008. During the game, DSU forced a season-high six turnovers en route to the team?s fifth conference win of the year. The Hornets have faced the Bison more than any other MEAC school (DSU leads 35-30-1).

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