Football

son in reference to Burnett.

On the other side of the ball, though, Tech just could not main-
tain their momentum from the first half. Even with Nesbitt still in the lineup, the Jackets had two
drives in the third quarter and ran just eleven offensive plays, includ-
ing a dropped pass and another Nesbitt fumble. Neither team scored in the quarter, and Tech
remained ahead 31-7.

Jacksonville State started off the fourth quarter by kicking a
26-yard field goal. Tech respond-
ed with a seven-play, 62-yard drive
that was capped off with a 26-yard
touchdown pass from Nesbitt to
A-back Anthony Allen.

It was Nesbitt’s last play of the game. The junior completed six of
11 pass attempts in the game for
141 yards and a touchdown and
11 pass attempts in the game.

The Jackets had two three of Tech’s
five fumbles. Scott Blair missed the extra
point attempt and sent a 42-yard
field goal. The Gamecocks put to
two extra points and reorganized special teams
as a team, including 335 on the

downs.

Although Nesbitt had the team’s lone inter-
ception early in the second quar-
ter after leading the team in 2008
with seven picks.

The unit as a whole was strong
at times, forcing the Gamecocks
to punt seven times, but struggled
in run support often. JSU’s top
two rushers, Calvin Middleton
and Jamal Young, each averaged
more than five yards per carry.

The reorganized special teams
unit had mixed results. Redshirt
sophomore Chandler Anderson
and Nesbitt were the team lead-
ers in rushing yards and attempts,
and Thomas led the team with
four receptions and 101 yards.

Tech racked up 497 total yards
as a team, including 335 on the
ground, but the Jackets likely
would have put up better numbers
if not for the three lost fumbles.

On the defensive side, Mor-
gan had two sacks and 2.5 tackles
for loss. Senior linebacker Sed-
rie Griffin contributed on seven
tackles, and junior rover Morgan
Burnett had the team’s lone inter-
ception early in the second quar-
ter after leading the team in 2008
with seven picks.

The unit as a whole was strong
at times, forcing the Gamecocks
to punt seven times, but struggled
in run support often. JSU’s top
two rushers, Calvin Middleton
and Jamal Young, each averaged
more than five yards per carry.

The seemingly easy win ended up
dousing the team’s mistakes in the
game. “In hindsight, scor-
ing on the first play of the game
might not have been as good as
you would think,” Johnson said.

While the three sacks were not
well below the average for the
Jackets from last season, it
does raise concerns. The caliber of
opposing teams’ offenses will
increase as the season progresses,
and the defense’s ability to get
penetration and attack the back-
field will be driven first and fore-
most by the line’s ability to match
the level of their opponents.
Overall, the defensive line did
de not raise new concerns with
their performance on Saturday, but
they did not answer the skeptics’
questions that existed prior to the
opening game.

Jerrard Tarrant jukes around JSU punter Patrick Tatum during his punt return for a touchdown in Saturday’s
game. Tarrant became the first Tech player to return a punt for a touchdown since Jonathan Smith in 2003.

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Interested in photography?
**Staff Picks**

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* The final column, labeled “Staff”, represents the consensus of the non-editor sports writers.

** Starting this week, picks will be made based on the spread rather than just the expected winner.

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Miami was expected to struggle early in the season thanks to a brutal four-game stretch against four ranked opponents, but one week into their 2009 campaign, the outlook has gotten brighter. The Hurricanes traveled to Tallahassee for a Monday night battle against No. 18 Florida State and pulled off the upset, topping the Seminoles 38-34 in one of the most exciting games of the opening week. With upcoming games against a pair of reeling teams in Virginia Tech and Oklahoma, the No. 20 Hurricanes have the opportunity to vault themselves into the upper tier of the national rankings.

Against FSU, Miami scored three touchdowns in the fourth quarter, including one with less than two minutes left, to take the lead. After the Seminole offense drove to within the Miami five-yard line in the final minute, the Hurricanes’ defense stepped up and held the home team out of the end zone on three straight plays to seal the victory.

Several Miami players played key roles in the comeback win, but none was more impressive than quarterback Jacory Harris. In just his third career start for Miami, Harris completed 21 of 34 passes for 386 yards, including an accurate 40-yard strike to a receiver. Heading into the Sept. 17 battle against the Jackets, Miami will have ten days off to prepare for the game. The ground attack had developed. JSU was able to break a number of decent runs in the game as their offensive line proved to be a match for Tech's revamped defensive front four.

PREDICTION: Tech 28, Miami 24

By Nishant Prasadh, Sports Editor
Football opens season with win over Jacksonville State

By Alex Mitchell
Contributing Writer

Junior B-back Jonathan Dwyer set the tone for Saturday’s football season opener when he broke a 74-yard touchdown run on Tech’s first offensive play of the season. It was one of five touchdowns for the Jackets on the day as they cruised to a 37-17 victory over Jackson- ville State University at Bobby Dodd Stadium to earn their first win of the 2009 campaign.

That first play, an option pitch to Dwyer, was executed to perfection. All of the linemen, backs, and receivers took their respective blocking assignments out of the play, and when Dwyer got the pitch from junior quarterback Josh Nesbitt, he had a wide-open field ahead and ran to the end zone untouched.

That play is designed to get the ball to the edge, and they made good blocks, the A-backs made good blocks and Josh [Nes- bitt] made a big read,” Dwyer said. On the ensuing kickoff, red- shirt junior linebacker Anthony Barlow forced a fumble that freshman safety Jamea Thomas recovered, and Tech was in position to take a big lead early in the game. The Gamecock defense stopped the Jackets near the goal line, though, and Tech settled for a 20-yard field goal by junior kicker Scott Blair to take a 10-0 lead.

When JSU finally started their first offensive possession, they went nowhere. Quarterback Marques Ivory, a Georgia na- tive starting for the Gamecocks in place of suspended senior Ryan Perrilloux, had his first pass knocked down at the line of scrimmage by junior defensive end Derrick Morgan.

“I saw the ball and saw it was a screen, and my first reaction was to get my hands up,” Morgan said.

Tech got the ball back but had an unsuccessful drive, going three-and-out after a dropped pass by sophomore A-back Embry Peeples on third down. On the Jackets’ next possession Nesbitt engineered a second touchdown drive that ended when Dwyer hurdled his way into the end zone from five yards out, giving Tech a 17-0 lead.

For the drive, Nesbitt had three runs for 29 yards and com- pleted an 18-yard pass to junior wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, and he narrowly missed on a pass to redshirt junior A-back Anthony Allen.

On Tech’s first drive of the second quarter, Nesbitt ran the offense well until he fumbled the ball in JSU territory, negating what would have been a long run. The Gamecocks made the most of Tech’s mistake and marched down the field towards their first touchdown.

The drive was capped off with a trick play: JSU receiver Brooks Robinson took the snap and threw a screen pass to Ivory, who fired to Robinson for a touchdown to put the Gamecocks on the board. The score cut the Jackets’ lead to 17-7.

As a result, several of the Jack- cots’ reserves were able to get signific- ant playing time in the second half. Freshman linebacker Julian Burnett was one backup who took advantage of the time on the field, as he had five tackles in the third quarter and finished the game with a team-high nine tackles.

“Just knowing that someone [has] my back in case I go down…that takes a lot of pressure off me,” said junior linebacker Brad Jeff-

Jonathan Dwyer jumps over a Jacksonville State defender to score his second touchdown of Saturday’s game.

Dwyer had 95 yards rushing, including a 74-yard touchdown run on Tech’s first offensive play of the season.

On Tech’s third drive of the game, Nesbitt ran the offense well until he fumbled the ball in JSU territory, negating what would have been a long run. The Gamecocks made the most of Tech’s mistake and marched down the field towards their first touchdown.

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Cross Country drops dual meet at UGA

By Steven Cappetta
Assistant Sports Editor

Both the men’s and women’s cross country teams opened their seasons last Saturday in a dual meet against Georgia at the UGA Equestrian Complex in Athens, Ga. Both teams fell to the Bulldogs by the same score of 35-30 as Georgia swept the top positions in both the men’s 5,000-meter and men’s 8,000-meter run.

Tech’s first finisher in the women’s race was junior Felicity Brower, who reached the finish line after 11 Bulldog runners. She finished with a time of 19:19. Freshman Elena Hubbard was the second to finish for the Jackets in her first ever collegiate race; she finished 16th overall and completed the race in 19:54.

On the men’s side, the first nine runners to finish were Bulldogs before senior Billy Manfre completed the race with a time of 26:28. Freshman Patrick Barrett finished one second behind Manfre at 26:29 in 11th place.

Tech lost two of their top male runners from last season in E.C. Collins and Nazar Tlisky, but the team returns several veterans in seniors Matt Hickey and Billy Markert and juniors D.J. McMillan and Mark Mendrek-Lasek. The women’s running squad was very young last season and returns all five of its top runners. Sophomore Mary Kate DuBard will be a strong returner for the Jackets this season after earning All-South Region honors with a 22nd-place finish at the NCAA South Region Championships last year.

Volleyball drops two in road set

Jackets fall against host MTSU and Ohio, beat NIU

By Nishanth Prasad
Sports Editor

After an exciting opening weekend in which the volleyball team took down Georgia and opened the season by winning their first three games, the Jackets stumbled in their first three games, losing their first set 25-14.

Tech dropped two of three games in last weekend’s Blue Raider Bash at Murfreesboro, Tenn., falling against host Middle Tennessee State University in four sets and Ohio University in five sets before rebounding to sweep the University of Northern Illinois and emerge from the weekend 4-2 on the season.

In their first game of the tournament on Friday night, the Jackets battled a 2008 NCAA Tournament team in Middle Tennessee and fell in four sets due to an inconsistent performance. The game was fairly even early in the first set, as Tech took advantage of the MTSU squad’s mistakes to build a 7-0 lead, but the Jackets were unable to keep pace beyond that point in the set. The Blue Raiders took the next 16 points as they blocked five attack attempts and forced Tech to burn two timeouts, and the hosts eventually took the first set 25-14.

Tech managed to come back in the second set; after struggling to build a lead as MTSU fought to a 12-12 tie, the Jackets won four straight points and did not relinquish the lead on route to a 25-20 victory, tying the match.

The third set was similar to the first, as the Jackets stayed close early on before allowing the Blue Raiders to build a big lead. This time, Tech was down 8-7 when NIU scored four points on a seven-point run to build a 15-7 lead and force the Jackets to burn two timeouts. Tech was unable to put together a string of more than two consecutive points after that, and MTSU went on to win the set 25-20.

The Blue Raiders jumped out to a quick lead in the fourth set, winning the first four points, but the Jackets chipped away at their lead over time and eventually tied the game at 16. After a four-point run, Tech led 24-22 with a chance to win the set, but MTSU fought back to win the next two points. The teams battled through several tiebreaker points, and with the score tied at 30, the Blue Raiders finally took two points in a row to claim the set and the match. It was Tech’s first loss of the season.

“We put ourselves in a position to win two sets and continue the match, but had too many mistakes at the end,” said Head Coach Tonya Johnson in an interview with ramblinwreck.com.

Freshman outside hitter Monique Mead once again led the team in kills with 13 and contributed to seven blocks, but she also had ten attack errors. Those mistakes were the story of the day for the Jackets, who hit .143 as a team; the only player to record a hit percentage above .300 was sophomore outside hitter Bailey Hunter, who hit .364 and recorded 12 kills.

Saturday afternoon’s game pitted the Jackets against the defending Mid-American Conference and Ohio University. Tech managed to win the first three sets of the first set and eventually going up 10-6 thanks to two kills apiece from freshman middle blocker Ata Sowik and senior middle blocker Brittany Roderick. The Bobcats were unable to put together a run of more than two sets until late in the set, and Mead recorded five kills and an untouched service ace as Tech won the first set 25-21.

The Jackets built up a three-point lead in the second set, but Ohio fought back to tie the game at 15. After Tech took the next point, the Bobcats went on to take a 22-17 lead, and they cruised to a 25-19 victory to tie the match at one set apiece.

An early 10-3 run for Ohio in the third set put them ahead 12-6, with Ellen Herman and Megan Simons combining for five kills during the run.

While Tech fought back to within one point at 16-15, the Bobcats would hold the lead for the remainder of the set. The Jackets won three consecutive points with the set on the line, but Ohio finally took the set 25-21 on Herman’s seventh set point.

By Steven Cappetta
Assistant Sports Editor

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