

2008 PIGSKIN PREVIEW



SHORTER

Hawks in senior mode

By Jeremy Stewart
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There is no set definition to determine when a college football team becomes an "established" program.

Sometimes it happens in a game. Sometimes it takes an entire season before reflection unveils that a team has arrived.

For the Shorter College Hawks, their fourth season has many signs that point to the potential of more success, more exposure and more opportunities to cement the belief that they are established.

At the forefront of what head coach Phil Jones and his staff are pumped about this season is the program's largest group of seniors, almost all of whom started in the Hawks' inaugural season in 2005.

"We're excited that these seniors are the first group that came here," Jones said. "They've been here the whole time."

"We're just so excited about them and the leadership they've given," Jones said. "Now it's their opportunity to be on the same age and maturity level with other teams."

Shorter has begun the pre-season on the minds of Mid-South Conference members as they were picked to finish second behind Bethel in the Western Division and received votes in the NAIA pre-season poll.

Staying in the poll is certainly on the minds of the Hawks, who have the rare opportunity to play in a national title game on their home turf when Rome hosts the NAIA National Football Championship game on Dec. 20.

A 7-4 overall record and 3-2 mark in the division last season has been plenty of a jumping off point for the players this season and Jones said their attitude has been exceptional.

"Normally, that means that they're serious about what they're doing and they want to (do well) really bad," Jones said.

"They know they have a chance and they want to take advantage of that chance."

On top of a solid group of seniors, Shorter will have 19 returning starters this season, a retention rate that the Hawks have grown accustomed to in their first few years of existence.

Leading the offense are All-MSC selections Raymone Nesbitt and Zach Morrison. Defensively, Shorter will welcome back three all-conference picks in Matt Yarbrough, Budd Keith and Will Oliver.



File photo / Rome News-Tribune

Shorter's Will Oliver (20), Logan Lollis (49) and Budd Keith — Oliver and Keith were All-Mid South Conference picks in 2007 — return to form the heart of the Hawks defense this season.

Quarterback was a position that was a question for the Hawks before the start of last season but former Adairsville standout Drew Elrod quickly won the starting job after transferring from Carson-Newman.

"Sometimes it's difficult, for him and for others, to insert himself into the system, particularly at the quarterback position," Jones said.

"He competed for the job. He won the job and his attitude and unselfishness has helped that transition very much."

Elrod was 66-for-112 passing last season for 772 yards and five touchdowns while rushing for 532 yards and another seven touchdowns.

Sophomore Ben Williams will once again be in the back-up spot.

Nesbitt leads the running back corps after picking up 495 yards and a pair of touchdowns as a junior. He will be joined by Trion graduate Chris Chapman.

With the bulk of Shorter's handoffs going to their fullbacks, the Hawks have the depth to feel more than comfortable in their situation.

'They know they have a chance and they want to take advantage of that chance.'

Phil Jones
Shorter head football coach

"We've got six fullbacks, which is unusual, and we can play any one of them," Jones said. "I'm not saying that they are all the same, but none of the six are out of the picture."

Leading the way are returners AJ Cooley, Pierre Toran and Dennis Stanley while newcomers include redshirt freshmen D.J. Cone and Blake Thomas as well as Adrian Hargett.

Hargett, a true freshman from Valdosta, was a standout at Lowndes County where he helped the Vikings win three of the past four Class AAAAA state championships.

The wideout position was an open race last year and leading receiver TC Jay, from Rockmart, will be back after making 13 catches for 180 yards a year ago.

The offensive line has been a constant nucleus for Shorter, led by Morrison at center, with the Hawks lone offensive loss coming up front with the graduation of Steven Johnson.

"Those guys are bigger and stronger," Jones said. "They've done a good job of working out in the off-season

and they seem to be in pretty good condition."

At inside linebacker once again are Logan Lollis and Garrett Hochstetler as well as Danny Bannach and Cameron Panther.

Sherrod Kimble and former Armuchee standout Mo Abdellatif anchor the outside linebackers spot with Rockmart grad Lashia Hutchins and Blake Ducatel looking to get more playing time also.

The Hawks' hard-hitting secondary will continue to be a bright spot with Oliver leading Shorter's defense in 2007 with 77 tackles (42 solo, 35 assists) while Keith had 39 total.

Corner AJ Baker, a former Calhoun standout, excelled last season with five interceptions returned for 161 yards and a touchdown.

"We think he's the best corner in the league, maybe the best DB," Jones said. "He's a good player."

Shorter retains most of its experience on special teams as well with all-conference kicker, and Model graduate, Lukas Gonzalez leading the way.

Gonzalez was named as an All-MSC placekicker and an honorable mention All-MSC punter last year when he hit 33-of-36 extra points, 8-of-14 field goals, led the team in scoring with 57 points, and averaged over 40 yards per punt.

2008 ROSTER

No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Pos.	High School
1	Jake Kelley	6-3	200	Sr.	WR	Cedartown
2	Dustin Perry	6-1	195	Jr.	WR	Cedartown
3	Ben Williams	6-0	195	So.	QB	Marietta
3	Brock Russell	5-10	165	Fr.	DB	Calera, Ala.
4	Chris Chapman	5-10	175	Sr.	SB	Trion
4	Spencer Bragg	5-10	180	Fr.	DB	Dalton
5	Demarko Huntley	5-11	165	Fr.	DB	Atl.-Douglass
5	Raymone Nesbitt	5-7	165	Sr.	SB	Cartersville
6	Caleb Carmean	6-1	205	Jr.	WR	Kennesaw
7	AJ Cooley	6-2	210	Jr.	FB	Bowdon
7	Zack Owens	6-1	198	Fr.	OLB	Rome
8	AJ Baker	5-9	160	Jr.	DB	Calhoun
9	Calvin Gibson	5-9	165	So.	QB	Stockbridge
9	Danny Bannach	6-3	235	So.	LB	Greenville, Tenn.
10	Drew Elrod	6-2	195	Jr.	QB	Adairsville
11	Jordan Grimsley	5-11	178	Fr.	QB	Wauchula, Fla.
11	Sharrod Kimble	6-0	240	Jr.	OLB	Powder Springs
12	Budd Keith	5-11	195	Sr.	DB	Toccoa
13	Chris Hight	6-1	190	Sr.	WR	Adairsville
13	DeVeion Haselrig	5-10	163	Fr.	DB	Rome
14	Allen Huntley	5-7	146	Fr.	WR	Atlanta
14	James Maxwell	5-8	177	Sr.	DB	Cartersville
15	Albert Huntley	5-7	154	Fr.	WR	Atlanta
15	Jermaine Woodard	6-1	190	So.	DB	Rome
16	David Byrd	5-11	180	Fr.	QB	Fayetteville
16	John Ward	5-10	190	Sr.	DB	Woodland, Ala.
17	Daniel Hazard	5-11	170	Fr.	OLB	Marietta
17	Jared Williams	5-10	170	Fr.	SB	Gainesville
18	Jonathan Ray	6-0	185	Fr.	DB	Winchester, Tenn.
18	Pierre Toran	5-10	205	So.	FB	Erie, Pa.
19	Dustin Duckett	5-10	175	Fr.	WR	Albertville, Ala.
19	Lashia Hutchins	6-0	220	So.	OLB	Aragon
20	Will Oliver	6-1	200	Sr.	DB	Toccoa
21	Josh Gibson	5-10	195	So.	DB	Watkinsville
21	Nick Bearden	6-1	246	Sr.	TE	Boaz, Ala.
22	Chris Powell	5-7	148	Fr.	SB	Hoschton
22	Collyn Copeland	6-2	215	Fr.	OLB	Rome
23	Andy Brown	6-0	175	Sr.	DB	Tampa, Fla.
23	Dennis Stanley	5-9	220	Jr.	FB	Kennesaw Mt.
24	Dion Giles	5-8	160	Fr.	DB	Athens
25	Donnie Mendence	5-10	215	Jr.	OLB	Rome
25	Antwon Appleton	5-7	160	Fr.	SB	Fort Payne, Ala.
26	Scott Yates	5-10	195	Fr.	OLB	Bowdon
26	T.C. Jay	5-10	195	So.	WR	Rockmart
27	Lukas Gonzalez	5-11	190	Sr.	K/P	Rome
28	Jeremy Norman	5-10	170	Fr.	SB	Murray County
29	Cody Boyd	6-0	195	Fr.	DB	Summerville
29	Thaddeus Douthit	5-8	168	So.	SB	Atlanta
30	Greg Eswine	5-9	200	Sr.	OLB	Canton
30	Kevin Hall	5-11	175	Fr.	SB	Henry County
32	David Mwamba	5-9	200	So.	SB	Libburn
32	Garrett Hochstetler	6-0	225	So.	ILB	Colbert
33	Muhammad Abdellatif	5-11	222	Sr.	OLB	Armuchee
34	Adrian Hargett	5-6	170	Fr.	FB	Valdosta
35	Jamaal Stinson	5-10	200	Jr.	SB	Chattanooga
35	Tony Sidney	5-10	175	So.	DB	Forsyth
36	Charlie Hernandez	6-0	165	So.	DB	Dacula
36	Zac Mobbs	6-5	195	Fr.	WR	Gaylesville, Ala.
37	Blake Terrell	5-11	185	Sr.	SB	Sardis
38	Abdull Haynes	6-0	190	So.	SB	Villa Rica
38	Jamey Rice	5-11	215	Fr.	OLB	Colbert
39	D.J. Cone	5-10	207	Fr.	FB	Gallant, Ala.
40	Blake Thomas	5-9	190	Fr.	FB	Dalton
40	Dalton Friar	5-10	220	Fr.	DL	Powder Springs
41	Logan Beer	6-0	170	Fr.	WR	Canton
42	Derik Cooper	5-9	180	So.	DB	Flintstone
42	Jesse Mcgee	6-0	191	Fr.	K/P	Winder
43	Kenneth James	5-11	200	Sr.	OLB	Fayetteville
44	Grant Myers	5-11	215	So.	ILB	Snellville
45	Cameron Panther	6-2	135	So.	ILB	Morrow
46	Matthew Yarbrough	6-3	230	Sr.	DL	LaFayette
47	Reggie Perkins	5-6	218	Fr.	OLB	Statesboro
48	Blake Ducatel	6-4	230	Jr.	OLB	Woodstock
49	Logan Lollis	6-3	230	Jr.	ILB	Lyons
50	Andy Kellogg	6-2	212	Fr.	OL	Buford
50	Will Wiggins	5-8	240	Sr.	DL	Cartersville
51	Joshua Pidgeon	6-3	245	Sr.	DL	Jackson
52	Sam Robison	5-10	255	Fr.	OL	Bremen
53	Kipp Buford	5-8	183	Fr.	OLB	Rome
54	Chris Poole	5-11	210	Fr.	OLB	Thomasville
54	Matt Atchley	6-4	275	Sr.	OL	Whiton
55	Baltizar Guzman	5-11	225	Fr.	OL	Rome
55	Drew Putnam	5-9	209	Fr.	ILB	Rome
56	CJ Kimbrough	5-11	195	Fr.	OLB	Rome
56	Matt Broome	5-10	275	So.	OL	Lindale
57	Brett Padgett	5-8	208	Fr.	ILB	Rome
58	Zach Morrison	6-0	270	Sr.	OL	Cumming
59	Joe Colquitt	5-10	200	Fr.	ILB	Cedartown
60	Justin Pearce	5-9	250	Fr.	ILB	McRae
60	Nick Newborn	6-0	300	Fr.	OL	Cartersville
61	Landon Littlejohn	6-3	246	Fr.	OL	LaFayette
62	Don Burkhalter	6-5	247	Fr.	OL	Rome
63	Tyler Hoptroff	5-10	225	Sr.	OL	Powder Springs
64	Levi Veda	6-1	290	Fr.	OL	Valdosta
64	Nick Norris	6-1	230	Fr.	ILB	Gainesville
65	Gabe Greasham	5-9	109	Fr.	DL	Hinesville Inst.
65	Randy Reed	5-8	220	So.	OL	Watkinsville
66	Josh Dorminy	6-2	240	So.	OL	Darien
67	Spenser Bettis	6-4	230	So.	OL	Cumming
68	Seth Lindsey	6-0	215	So.	OL	Trion
68	Taylor Everett	6-0	240	Fr.	DL	Trenton
69	Lonergon Honore	5-9	275	So.	DL	New Orleans, La.
69	Ryan Willoughby	5-10	260	So.	OL	Marietta
70	Jace Whitsey	6-3	314	Fr.	DL	Savannah
71	Will Frasier	6-1	225	So.	DL	Aragon
72	Curtis John	6-0	280	Sr.	DL	Marietta
73	David Hall	6-1	255	Fr.	DL	Dalton
73	Emmanuel Spragin	5-10	305	Fr.	OL	New Bern, N.C.
74	Miles Holcomb	6-3	270	So.	OL	Grossville, Ala.
75	Brad Smith	6-4	245	Sr.	OL	Loganville
76	Larry Bobo	6-1	219	Fr.	OLB	Atlanta
76	Tommy Goforth	5-10	220	Fr.	OL	Murray County
77	Chris Legg	6-5	245	So.	DL	Suwanee
77	John Fricks	6-4	264	Fr.	OL	Fayetteville, Ala.
78	Nick Donogan	6-4	330	Fr.	OL	Monroe
79	Seth Baker	6-0	250	So.	OL	Libburn
80	J.C. Beason	6-3	229	Fr.	TE	Gaylesville, Ala.
81	DJ Hughes	5-7	151	Fr.	WR	Hartwell
82	Robert Brown	6-2	242	Fr.	DL	Winder
83	Chris McElrath	5-8	160	Fr.	WR	Fort Payne, Ala.
85	Collin Woodydy	6-1	220	Fr.	TE	Fayetteville
86	Bo Beare	6-0	160	So.	WR	Dacula
88	Brock Pyle	5-10	225	Jr.	TE	Adairsville
89	Will Peterson	6-2	245	Sr.	TE	Powder Springs
90	Jackson Abercrombie	6-3	230	Sr.	DL	Rome
91	Jarrett Crockwell	6-2	270	Fr.	OL	Fairburn
92	Ivan Sharpe	6-0	265	Fr.	DL	Stone Mountain
95	Justin Hooper	6-5	250	Fr.	DL	Ranger
96	Jeremiah Hammond	6-2	263	Sr.	DL	Rome
97	Andrew Schramper	6-1	245	Sr.	DL	Marietta
98	Drew Burney	6-2	160	Fr.	K/P	Douglasville
99	Bernard Michel	6-2	220	Sr.	DL	Stone Mountain



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Shorter running back Ramone Nesbitt returns for his senior year after earning All-Mid South Conference honors in 2007.

2008 SCHEDULE

Aug. 28	at Western Carolina	7 p.m.
Sept. 13	at LaGrange	1 p.m.
Sept. 20	at Pikeville	1:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Faulkner	2:30 p.m.
Oct. 4	at Campbellsville	1 p.m.
Oct. 6	West Virginia Tech	2 p.m.
Oct. 11	Lambuth	1:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	North Greenville	1:30 p.m.
Oct. 23	Union (Ky.)	7 p.m.
Nov. 1	at Cumberland	2:30 p.m.
Nov. 8	Belhaven	1:30 p.m.
Nov. 8	at Bethel	8 p.m.

(All home games at Barron Stadium)

HAWKS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Phil Jones, 17-14 in three seasons.
2007 RECORD: 7-4.
OFFENSE: Quarterback Drew Elrod, slotback Raymone Nesbitt and fullback A.J. Cooley return to lead triple-option attack. In rushing last year, Shorter ranked third in NAIA with an average 284.4 yards. Of Elrod's 1,304 yards of total offense, 772 were in the air.
DEFENSE: The Hawks must replace leader Ryan Gloer the Mid-South Conference West Division player of the year, but tandem of former Stephens County defensive backs, Will Oliver and Budd Keith, combined for seven interceptions. Shorter ranked third in the MSC against the run.
OPENER: Aug. 28 at Western Carolina.
OUTLOOK: After a difficult opener against the NCAA Division I Catamounts, Shorter should have an easy home game two weeks later against LaGrange, which is 0-20 since starting its program. The Hawks play just one more game out of conference the rest of the year. Their division, led by Bethel (Tenn.) is competitive, but the winner of the East, led by Virginia-Wise, Cumberlands (Ky.) and Georgetown (Ky.), might make it tough for the West champion to advance to the NAIA playoffs.