

# ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**ATHLETICS**

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## **ARKANSAS TECH FOOTBALL HAS BEGUN PRESEASON PRACTICES; SET FOR FULL CONTACT WORKOUTS ON MONDAY**

**RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas** – Arkansas Tech Wonder Boys Football began preseason practices for the 2006 season on Wednesday with physicals and are set to begin full contact practices on Monday, which is also the first day Tech can begin alternating between one-a-day and two-a-day workouts.

Tech Head Football Coach **Steve Mullins** welcomed about 130 players for preseason practice on Wednesday and he's been pleased with the progress his team has made since beginning preseason drills.

"I'm pleased with our progress so far in our preseason practices," Mullins said following Saturday's workout in shoulder pads and helmets. "Our offense's timing is much better than it was at the end of spring football and our players have picked up the new offensive and defensive schemes."

During spring practice, Tech's new offensive scheme was hindered by injuries to its top two quarterbacks, sophomores **Cole Barthel** (Decatur, Ala.) and **Justin Ray** (Benton, Ark.), but since the beginning of fall workouts, Tech's offense has improved its consistency with Ray and Barthel back under center.

"The health of our quarterbacks has helped our offense make strides," said Mullins, who is entering his 10 season with the Wonder Boys in the fall.

Mullins said that Ray is almost completely healed from an ankle injury suffered playing intramural basketball before the start of spring drills, while Barthel is at 90 percent after ACL surgery in the spring. Barthel injured his knee in a non-contact drill on the first day of spring drills and sat out the rest of spring practice.

"We still don't know if Cole is going to be cleared for contact drills, but at least we can get him out there and work on some route timing and pass skeletons," said Mullins. "If he (Cole) can get ready, it'll be great. I think it will be a remarkable thing coming off of ACL surgery."

Tech, who will conduct its final workout in helmets and shoulder pads on Sunday, will begin full contact workouts on Monday with two practices. From that point, the Wonder Boys will alternate between twice-a-day workouts and one-a-day practices until beginning classes on Aug. 23.

"I'm excited to get the chance to see our players put on full pads and get after each other beginning Monday," Mullins said.

Mullins said that his team will have its first scrimmage of the fall on Aug. 19 and will most likely have its annual Green and Gold Scrimmage on Aug. 23, if Tech is able to find a place to hold the scrimmage.

"We're hoping we're able to hold our second scrimmage at Cyclone Stadium, if it can be worked out with Russellville High School officials," Mullins said.

The Wonder Boys are playing their five home games this season at Russellville High School's Cyclone Stadium due to renovations on Buerkle Field as part of the school's \$4-million "Return to Glory" capital campaign.

The Wonder Boys will open its 2006 season on Thursday, Aug. 31 when they face off against Northeastern [OK] State. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. at Cyclone Stadium.

#### **Other Tech Football News:**

\* - Tech Sports Information Director **Ben Greenberg** and Tech's Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations **Kelly Davis** have announced that the first of four Green and Gold Luncheons scheduled for the 2006-07 school year will be on Monday, Aug. 28 at Western Sizzlin Restaurant on 1105 E. Main in Russellville. The luncheon is scheduled to begin at 11:45 a.m. and will feature preseason previews of Tech's fall sports by Mullins, Golden Suns Volleyball Coach **Kristy Kale** and Tech Cross Country Coach **Tom Aspel**. For more information on the luncheons, please contact **Ericka Beavers** in the Green and Gold Office at (479) 968-0337. The second luncheon is scheduled for Monday, Nov. 6 at 11:45 a.m. and will feature a preview of the men's and women's basketball teams by Wonder Boys coach **Mark Downey** and Golden Suns coach **Todd Schaefer**. Davis and Greenberg said the final two luncheons have yet to be scheduled for this school year.

\* - Mullins announced that he is scheduled to serve this season on two AFCA (American Football Coaches Association) Committees as he will be again be one of the 25 voters in the AFCA's weekly NCAA Division II Top 25 Poll and will serve on the association's NCAA Division II All-American Committee that will select the association's 25-member Division II All-America team at the end of the season.

\* - For the second consecutive season, Russellville's KWKK (100.9 FM), the official radio broadcast home of Tech Athletics, will air Tech Talk, a 30-minute program dedicated to Tech Athletics, each Monday night beginning at 6:30 p.m. This year's Tech Talk program will begin on Aug. 28 and run until the end of the school year in mid-May. The show is hosted by **Johnny Story** and the first show will feature Mullins and Kale.

\* - The Wonder Boys enter the 2006 season with 494 all-time wins, which is 11th on the all-time winningest NCAA Division II list. Pittsburg State is the all-time winningest NCAA Division II program with 602 wins, while Tuskegee is second with 573 wins. In addition, Tech is the winningest team in Arkansas since 1999 as the Wonder Boys have a 50-26 record. Central Arkansas, Tech's former AIC and GSC rival, and Arkansas are tied for second on the list with 48 wins. UCA is 48-31 overall since 1999, while Arkansas is 48-37 over the same period. Southern Arkansas was won 45 games since 1999 and has a record of 45-31.

**-- Tech Athletics --**