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Eagle Nation Gets First-Hand Look At Squad

Slew of activities surround Spring Game

Ethan Flynn



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STATESBORO - The Eagle Nation finally had their first opportunity to see the Eagles compete in the annual Blue vs. Spring Game on Saturday. With the "The Prettiest Little Stadium in America," as the venue for the game, the Eagles had nearly perfect weather conditions throughout the game. It was 72 degrees, sunny and a light breeze that made it seem a bit like Fall football weather.

Prior to kickoff, the Eagle Nation could be seen enjoying the traditional festivities of a game day in Statesboro and the festivities of this year's Blue vs. White Spring Game. Fans spent time tailgating and even had the chance to enter the third annual Spring Football Tailgate Cook-Off where they could serve as the tasting judges for those competing.

"It brings back a lot of memories. It's great to be hear with some of my former teammates. I like how the field looks and I think the Coach Summers' Era is going to

bring a lot of success to the program," said former safety [Matt Dobson](#).

As the atmosphere continued to become more lively, the Eagle Nation made sure they were heard upon entering "OUR HOUSE." Chants from the fans could be heard loud and clear. From the young to the old, the Eagle Nation showed up ready to usher in the "Summers Time" of the Georgia Southern Football Program. With the familiarity of the original grass field gone, the Eagles had their first chance to get a feel for what to expect with the newly turfed field as they began their usual warmup drills prior to playing.

"Shaw has a tremendous product," said Director of Athletics for Georgia Southern [Tom Kleinlein](#). "There's a lot of technology that goes into this field. There's a G-shock padding system that goes underneath the field to improve safety to reduce injuries. Next week this field is will undergo a chemical treatment that will make this field 20-30 degrees cooler on warmer days."

When warmups were completed, Summers brought the Eagles into the center of the field to speak with them prior to kickoff. He then went into the stands where he explained the significance and importance of his inaugural showing of the Georgia Southern Football program under his direction and thanked all of those who have supported GS from its start until today. Summers also explained what the Eagle Nation could expect to see with the Blue vs. White Spring Game. The game consisted of four, 12-minute quarters with a full team of referees. Quarterbacks were eliminated of any contact and could only be ruled down by two-hand touch. The punt game was limited.

"Our kids are starting to follow what Coach Summers and his coaching staff expects both on and off the field. I'm very pleased with how our team is developing," said Kleinlein.

Kickoff took place at 12:05 p.m. The first team to receive the ball was the Blue team which was led by [Kevin Ellison](#). The Blue team couldn't find a rhythm their first possession and was forced to punt after three plays. The second team to receive the ball was the White team which was led by [Favian Upshaw](#). The White team found an excellent rhythm their first possession and was able to score on a [Chaz Thornton](#) rushing touchdown. Throughout the game, Ellison and [Favian Upshaw](#) alternated from the Blue and White teams to give them varying looks both offensively and defensively. A number of players alternated to from the Blue and White teams due to injuries on the depth chart as well. The White team led the Blue team 13-0 at halftime. During halftime, the winners of the following competitions were announced: Third Annual Spring Football Tailgate Cook-Off, UniFlame Gas Grill Giveaway and the Punt, Pass and Kick Contest. The White team would continue to score posting 27 points. The Blue team scored in the final 45 seconds of the fourth quarter by a passing touchdown from Upshaw to [BJ Johnson III](#) to make it 27-7 as the game ended shortly thereafter.

"Once we started, it just kept snowballing for us. Today was a lot fun. We got to play

football again ... I couldn't get tackled. It was great to be out there with the guys," said Upshaw.

"I think the things we wanted to get accomplished today we were able to get done. We were trying to work and develop," head coach [Tyson Summers](#) said.

Following the game, those who were part of the Eagle Football Program for the GoDaddy Bowl, had the opportunity to be recognized in the ring ceremony in front of the Eagle Nation.

"The GoDaddy Bowl rings are an honor. Talking about Georgia Southern football, you talk championships," said Summers.

The Eagles set up for a 30-minute autograph session where fans were give limited-edition Spring Football posters to have signed by the Eagles and Summers.

The Eagle Nation was able to experience a couple of firsts today during the inaugural Blue vs. White Spring Game under the direction of Summers. The nearly perfect weather, the newly turfed field and a team Eagles looking to continue improving, were all the ingredients needed for this historic day. In the wise words of the legendary Erk Russell, "...ONE. MORE. TIME. for the greatest team in America!"

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