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White Tops Blue in Football Spring Game

The Eagles competed on the new turf in Paulson Stadium

Marc Gignac

STATESBORO, Ga. – Chaz Thornton scored two touchdowns, including a 45-yard scamper in the fourth quarter, to lead the White Team to a 27-7 victory over the Blue Team in the Georgia Southern football Blue-White Spring Game Saturday afternoon in Paulson Stadium.
Favian Upshaw connected with BJ Johnson III for an 18-yard touchdown pass late in the fourth for the Blue Team's lone score. Ironhead Gallon picked off a pass and returned it 31 yards for a touchdown, while Younghoe Koo and Tyler Bass each knocked in field goals for the White Team.

Many of the offensive lineman played for both the Blue and White Teams, and the Eagles' top two quarterbacks, Upshaw and Kevin Ellison, split time with both teams.

The defensive line was very productive with Ryan George and Bernard Dawson each recording two sacks, and Nardo Govan posting another. Jamal Johnson, J.B. Kouassi and Darrius Sapp all had tackles for loss.

For the student-athletes, the game was a chance to go live in a game-like environment for the first time since last December.

"It was a lot of fun," said Upshaw. "We got to play football again. It's fun to be out there playing football with the guys. Everybody loves to be out in Paulson and playing as fast as possible."

"Playing in an environment like this with the fans out here in game-like situation kind of amps it up a little bit and gets the juices flowing," added Johnson III. "It just makes everybody compete a little harder."

Head coach Tyson Summers went into the day thinking the Eagles would have an opportunity to work on their one-back looks, inside zone, outside zone and the passing game.

"I thought we did an okay job of that," said Summers. "The defense came out with a lot of energy, and they played like they had some swag and some confidence. Offensively, we've got to be able to get something going, and all it takes is one explosive play to get us going and headed in the right direction. The thing that I'd like to see a better job of is our leadership. I thought we lacked that and have a ways to go with that - when something poor happened, us not being able to stand up and rally the troops and being able to make something happen off of it."

The Eagles have four more practices scheduled before the end of spring ball. For Summers, those sessions will be about refinement.

"Our install is in so now, it's about us tightening up what we're going to do, what we are and what our true identity is," he said.

Notes: Ships and Hose won the third annual Tailgate Cook-Off, which included two tickets and a night in a hotel for the game at Georgia Tech... Justin Polk was the winner of the UniFlame Gas Grill giveaway... Winners of the first Punt, Pass and Kick contest were: 5-6 girls Zoe Bostian; 7-8 girls Arleah Leverett; 9-10 girls Caroline Seaton; 11-12 girls Savannah Mercer; 5-6 boys Lindin Collins; 7-8 boys Jaxon Kennedy; 9-10 boys Lonnie Morris; 11-12 boys Mitchell.
The Eagles received their 2015 GoDaddy Bowl Championship rings after the scrimmage before signing autographs for fans.

**New Playing Surface**
Saturday's Spring Game and encompassing events were the first on the new turf playing field for Glenn Bryant Field at Paulson Stadium, provided by Sports Turf out of Calhoun, Georgia. Installation of the new field - Shaw's Legion 41 system, a two-inch, dual fiber system that combines slit film, the most durable synthetic fiber turf, and a monofilament film, which gives the field excellent performance and aesthetic qualities - began in February.

The base of the field is comprised of highly-compacted stone, along with a Brock Powerbase pad for safety and drainage. Over 320,000 pounds of sand and 230,000 pounds of crumb rubber - a material made from recycled tires - were used as the turf's infill.

"I think it gives you better footing and makes you feel more explosive out there," said Johnson III. "It's a lot softer. The beads (crumb rubber) mess with you a little, but other than that, it's pretty cool."

To keep the field cool in the South Georgia heat, Shaw Sports Turf will install HydroChill, an evaporative cooling system applied to the infill to help cool the field in the same way the body cools itself through sweating. That process begins on Sunday.

**Season Tickets**
Football season tickets and parking for the 2016 season are on sale and can be purchased by visiting [GSEagles.com/tickets](http://GSEagles.com/tickets), calling 1-800-GSU-WINS or visiting the Ticket Office Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. in the Cowart Building located at 203 Lanier Drive in Statesboro. Save 140 percent by buying season tickets. Tickets start as low as $75 per person for the season.

Season tickets can also be purchased at the upcoming Coaches Caravan events. VISA, MasterCard, AmEx, Discover and cash are accepted.

**Coaches Caravans**
Eagle fans around the great state of Georgia and surrounding areas, get ready to meet with Georgia Southern's coaching staff! New head football coach Tyson Summers, alongside Director of Athletics Tom Kleinlein, other coaches and personnel from Eagle Athletics, will be touring the state from to get fans riled up for the upcoming season.

The Georgia Southern University Athletic Foundation invites Eagle Nation to come out in full force when the 2016 Coaches Caravan rolls into your city. The caravan will kick off Tuesday, Apr. 26, in Savannah at Carey Hilliard's Banquet Hall. The tour includes 12 stops from Tuesday, April 26, to Friday, May 13. View a map and find out more information regarding the Caravan by visiting [GSEagles.com/Caravan](http://GSEagles.com/Caravan).
Purchase tickets to a Coaches Caravan stop today! Coaches in attendance, times and prices will vary. To purchase tickets, RSVP or obtain more information visit GSEagles.com/Caravan. Further questions may be directed to the Georgia Southern Athletic Foundation at 1-800-GSU-WINS or AthleticFoundation@GeorgiaSouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides up-to-date information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics, iOS app Georgia Southern Eagles and Android app Eagles GATA. Fans can purchase tickets to Georgia Southern Athletics events by visiting GSEagles.com/tickets.

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