

Winn's calmness great asset as UTM starting quarterback

By Randy Cavin
Sports Editor

Some football players will fold when put in the spotlight as the pressure to perform gets to be too much.

That has not happened yet and probably will not to UT Martin starting quarterback and former Dresden standout Dresser Winn. He does not seem to ever get rattled.

The plans were to redshirt Winn last year, but Skyhawk head coach Jason Simpson took that tag off of him midway into the season when the offense turned stale. The offensive line was not playing well. The run game was getting knocked around and the passing game was dismal at best.

Simpson decided it was time to make a change and gave Winn his first start on the road against Eastern Kentucky. The Skyhawks lost that game, but they scored 21 points as Winn completed 14-of-25 passing attempts for 216 yards and one touchdown.

The most telling tale of that game is Winn was only picked off one time, which was the only one he threw in his five starts. He took over the starting role as quarterback after Troy Cook threw six interceptions in the first six games of the season.

Winn handled the pressure quite well his first start and kept on handling it the rest of the season. Now the starting job is officially his.

"That is the cool thing about Dresser," Simpson said. "He is such a calm person. You don't see him get under pressure. I think he will admit there were butterflies, nervousness and all of that. He has the same, and this is what is unique about him, he has the same demeanor whenever he enters the building and I think that is why he is so fun to coach."

Even in high school, he was put under the scope to go out and be the best quarterback, not just in this area, but in the state. Sure, he proved to be the best in Class A in 2015 when he was named Mr. Football Back, but he would have gladly let someone else win that award if it had meant winning a state championship.

He was a semifinalist for that very same award his senior season, but he did not need or really want to win it. Winn wanted Dresden to capture the state title — which it did — as a team.

That is what is most important to him — winning as a team. That is how humble the sophomore quarterback is.

"It does not matter if he is playing Halls or Jacksonville State," Simpson said. "That is the way he is. He likes to play and he likes to compete. I don't care if you are playing horseshoes or basketball, his eye-to-hand coordination is so good. He is probably good at Monopoly."

"He is fun to coach and fun to talk about and his teammates respect him. They recognized last year, even when he was redshirted, that he could help us. I hated to burn that redshirt, but we knew we needed to do it to get him prepared for this season."

Winn helped last year's seniors end up with a winning record after the Skyhawks went 3-2 in his five starts. His three victories came against Tennessee Tech, SEMO and Eastern Illinois. The Skyhawks played Jacksonville State to the wire in a 14-7 loss.

He owns game highs last sea-

son in passing yards (224) and longest pass (69 yards). Winn had combined total of 864 yards in five games with 744 passing and 120 rushing. He threw five touchdown passes to only one interception and he ran for one score.

Now Winn is ready to take the next step as the starting quarterback and he thinks the offense is poised to see an upswing this season.

"I feel the offense is more up to the task," he said. "I know it is more upbeat and ready to go. We are in kilter with each other. I feel like the offense has every piece



Dresser Winn takes the ball into the end zone on the first day of the preseason camp. Winn will begin his sophomore season as the starting quarterback for the Skyhawks.

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