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THE PARTHENON

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2014 | VOL. 118 NO. 11 | MARSHALL UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER | marshallparthenon.com

FOOTBALL EDITION

**2013
C-USA EAST
DIVISION
CHAMPIONS**

**2013
MILITARY
BOWL
CHAMPIONS**

2014...

DARRYL ROBERTS

RAKEEM CATO

FILE PHOTOS

TOMMY SHULER

FOOTBALL EDITION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2014 | THE PARTHENON | MARSHALLPARTHENON.COM

Marshall University Thundering Herd

Fall 2014 Schedule

The Miami (Ohio) RedHawks

Aug. 30 – at Miami (Ohio) University
Location: Oxford, Ohio
Mascot: RedHawks
2013 record: 0-12, 0-8 in MAC



The Thundering Herd and the RedHawks have had bad blood since 1971 when the RedHawks showed no mercy to the Young Thundering Herd. The RedHawks are coming off of a losing season, with the last three opponents scoring a combined 122 points, or five more than the RedHawks’ offense managed the entire regular season. The RedHawks enter the new season with a fresh coach — former Notre Dame assistant Chuck Martin.

The Rhode Island Rams

Sept. 6 – vs. Rhode Island University
Location: Kingston, Rhode Island
Mascot: Rams
2013 record: 3-9, 2-6 in CAA



This is the first time the Thundering Herd is facing the Rams. The Rams are coming off of a four-game losing streak, including six of the last seven games. The last time the Rams won a conference championship was 1985. Like the Miami (Ohio), Rhode Island is also under the direction of a new head coach, former Sacred Heart University head coach Jim Fleming. Fleming was 21-1 in 2000-01, his only head coaching seasons.

The Ohio Bobcats

Sept. 13 – vs. Ohio University
Location: Athens, Ohio
Mascot: Bobcats
2013 record: 7-6, 4-4 in MAC



The 2014 meeting between these two rivals will be the 58th Battle for the Bell and Hall of Fame Weekend for the Herd. The Bobcats are coming in with three straight wins over the Thundering Herd. Ohio is also on a five-year postseason streak, being one of two current MAC programs to reach a bowl game in five or more seasons in a row, including Northern Illinois (2009-13) and the current C-USA Marshall (1997-2002) when it was in the MAC. With a shaky offense, the Bobcats are looking for its seasoned defense to carry the team to another bowl win.

The Akron Zips

Sept. 20 – at Akron, Ohio
Location: Akron, Ohio
Mascot: Zips
2013 record: 5-7, 4-4 in MAC



Six of Akron’s 2014 opponents—Marshall (Military), Pittsburgh (Little Caesars Pizza), Ohio (Beef ‘O’ Brady’s), Ball State (GoDaddy), Bowling Green (Little Caesars Pizza), and Buffalo (Famous Idaho Potato)—participated in bowls in 2013. This season five of Akron’s 12 regular-season games will not be played on Saturday. Akron enters its sixth season on campus at InfoCision Stadium– Summa Field. The Zips have a 10-21 record at the venue after winning their 2014 season opener against Howard, 41-0, Thursday, Aug. 28.

The Old Dominion Monarchs

Oct. 4 – at Old Dominion
Location: Norfolk, Virginia
Mascot: Monarchs
2013 record: 8-4, 0-0



Old Dominion is new to Conference USA this season, coming from the Colonial Athletic Association. Old Dominion’s program has only been revived for five years and is looking to climb the C-USA ladder in the upcoming years.

The Middle Tennessee State Blue Raiders

Oct. 11 – vs. Middle Tennessee State
Location: Murfreesboro, Tennessee
Mascot: Blue Raiders
2013 record: 8-4, 6-2 in C-USA



The Blue Raiders are coming off a successful first season in C-USA. The Blue Raiders win against the Herd last season ignited a win streak through Novemeber. MTSU finished the season one game behind Marshall in the East Division. The Blue Raiders travel to Huntington as part of the Herd’s homecoming weekend.

The Florida International Golden Panthers

Oct. 18 - at Florida Int’l
Location: Miami, Florida
Mascot: Golden Panthers
2013 record: 1-11, 1-7 C-USA



Florida International did not fare as well as the Blue Raiders in its inaugural C-USA run. The Herd and Golden Panthers met in the 2011 Beef-o-Brady’s bowl, in which the Herd was victorious 20-10. The Golden Panthers are looking to have better season with 16 returning starters, but it is not likely to be much better.

The Florida Atlantic Owls

Oct. 25 – vs. Florida Atlantic
Location: Boca Raton, Florida
Mascot: Owls
2012 record: 6-6, 4-4 in C-USA



Also in its second year in C-USA and complete with a new coach, FAU is looking to improve on its so-so season. South Florida-raised head coach Charlie Partridge has recruited from home, the same area many of Marshall’s recruits hail from. A four-star running back from Fort Lauderdale ranks among the 15 best in his position in the country.

The Southern Miss Golden Eagles

Nov. 8 – at Southern Miss
Location: Hattiesburg, Miss.
Mascot: Golden Eagles
2013 record: 1-11, 1-7 in C-USA



Southern Miss had a disastrous season in 2012, plummeting from C-USA Champions in 2011 to being winless in 2012. Ellis Johnson was fired after only one season as head coach and was replaced by Todd Monken. Monken did not take the team much farther, not ending the losing streak until the end of last season against UAB. Monken and the Golden Eagles need to hope they can remain energized from the last game and move back in the C-USA bowl picture.

The Rice Owls

Nov. 15 – vs. Rice University
Location: Houston, Texas
Mascot: Owls
2013 record: 10-4, 7-1 in C-USA



The Thundering Herd has a bone to pick with the Owls. Rice stole the Conference Championship game from Huntington, then beat the Herd at home, even though the Herd was favored to win. Rice comes into the Herd’s house this time around, but the Owls will have their eye on another championship and a bowl win. The Owls have 12 returning starters.

The University of Alabama-Birmingham Blazers

Nov. 22 – at UAB
Location: Birmingham, Alaba
Mascot: Blazers
2013 record: 2-10, 1-7 in C-USA



Add UAB to the list of teams with mediocre 2013 seasons and new coaches to kick off 2014. The Blazers gave Southern Miss its only win at the end of last season. This season, new coach Bill Clark is looking to rebuild his team with a new quarterback and strong wide receiver. But the team needs to get past its history of losing - the team hasn’t had a winning season in nine years.

The Western Kentucky Hilltoppers

Nov. 28 – vs. Western Kentucky University
Location: Bowling Green, Kentucky
Mascot: Hilltoppers
2013 record: 8-4, 4-3 in Sun Belt



The last time the Thundering Herd played the Hilltoppers was 1996 and the Marshall has won all four previous meetings. This will be the key team for the Herd to beat in order to finish out the season undefeated. WKU is heavily reliant on quarterback Brandon Doughty, but is rebuilding its defense. The defense will be better in November than in September, however, which makes this a team to keep an eye on throughout the season.

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FOOTBALL EDITION

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Herd receiver pool overflowing with talent

By JAMES COLLIER
FOR THE PARTHENON

Marshall University football’s offense is much like a favorite recipe that contains a secret ingredient.

Start with a Heisman Trophy candidate in Rakeem Cato, mix in a talented group of receivers and stir in the secret ingredient wide receiver coach Mike Furrey said is a must—consistency.

As Cato enters his senior season, the Miami Central native has several passing records within his grasp. However, his place in the history books rests solely on the fingertips of his eager receivers jockeying for playing time.

Coming off back-to-back 100-catch seasons will be Cato’s favorite returning target and former high school teammate, Tommy Shuler. Shuler backed up his 110-catch season in 2012 with a 106-catch season last year and now stands to do something no receiver has yet to do in college football—go back-to-back-to-back.

Shuler, who looks at Furrey as a mentor both on and off the field, said the former NFL receiver can see even the slightest mistake in something Shuler may think he does perfectly, which does nothing but make him a better player.

“Coach Furrey is my biggest critic,” Shuler said. “We can go in the film room and I’ll think I ran a route right and he can find a little thing that can make me better.”

In an offense that returns seven receivers from last year’s team and welcomes five fresh faces, that is the expectations for a group of receivers that graces this season’s squad.

“This may be the best group of receivers I’ve seen since being here at Marshall,” said head coach Doc Holliday.

But with so many great receivers volleying for a spot on the depth chart, it would appear the decision of who plays and who sits would be difficult. Coach Furrey said it’s not as difficult as one would think.

“When it all comes down to it, you need to have a reliable guy that can run great routes, get open and catch the football,” Furrey said. “The guy who has all the elements, who is creating production by the time we get out of camp, that will be who is on the field come Miami.”

Production is a must in a pass-first, high-tempo offense orchestrated by Cato. The biggest concern receiving wise for the Herd is finding help for Shuler who is sure to draw double-coverage nearly anytime he steps on the field.

“Going into prep for Miami, hopefully we will have a couple inside

guys that can help Tommy out,” Furrey said. “Hopefully we have one or two guys who are just dominant outside receivers with guys who can come in and give them some balance and rest.”

That balance would be much welcomed. Of the 315 total completed passes last season, 156 went to Shuler and former tight end Gator Hoskins. Of the six other receivers returning from last season, they have collectively caught 38 fewer passes than Shuler.

As the Herd looks for a true outside threat that could draw double coverage away from Shuler, it has three viable candidates in Davonte Allen, Deandre Reaves and Angelo Jean-Louis. All three players have hopes of giving Cato a Randy Moss or Aaron Dobson-type of target that would stretch out defenses downfield.

Allen caught only nine passes in 2013, but is looking for a way to move past the potential game-tying touchdown pass in triple-overtime last year at Virginia Tech. While Allen has shown significant progress during the spring and summer sessions, his game time consistency is still a giant question mark, something Furrey said is a hump Allen has to get over.

“He’s showing things that he hasn’t shown before and he’s real comfortable,” Furrey said. “We just have to make sure that he can get over the hill and say ‘I’m the guy’. Then we need another one too.”

If Allen can be “that guy” as Coach Furrey said, then it becomes a race between Reaves and Jean-Louis for the other outside position. Reaves—who worked as an inside receiver up until Monday—moves to the outside in hopes of using his shifty and explosive speed to draw extra coverage to him, freeing up someone to get open.

“I’m going to try to use my quickness to my advantage and get around whoever that is and either get open or get somebody else open,” Reaves said “If I take two guys with me, that frees somebody else up.”

Reaves, who caught only six passes last season as he worked primarily as the Herd’s kick-off returner, said he does not mind the



move to the outside if it’s what’s best for the team. “If they need me to play center, I’ll play center,” Reaves said. “If they need me to replace Cato, somehow, someway, then that’s what I’ve got to do. Wherever they need me, I’ll play.”

But do not count out Jean-Louis who sat out last year after hurting his knee during the season kept him off the field. The redshirt freshman has played himself into the starting position for the Miami game with his stellar play during camp. Jean-Louis has worked well with Cato during the scrimmage portions of practice and has held his own against the Herd’s starting secondary.

But can the rookie hold his own when the big lights go on, as he has yet to catch a pass in a true game situation? What about the rest of the group who is hungry for time on the field?

With crafty veterans Craig Wilkins and Demetrius Evans fighting for their spot on the field, they have a stampede of competition on their heels.

But no matter the position or year of a player, Coach Furrey still reverts to the importance of production.

“With what they’re all capable of doing, if they can produce, we have to find a place for them to play,” Furrey said. “Our goal is to get five or six guys by the time we start Miami. Maybe the seven-eight-nine guy could be hard to figure out and then it will come down to special teams.”

With the recipe for playing time laid out to the group by Furrey on a daily basis, he said playing comes down to one thing.

“The guy who has all the elements and is creating production by the time we get out of camp, he will be the guy on the field,” Furrey said.

However, with this talented group battling for the same thing, playing time may not be as simple to decide as one may think—it may be even easier as production is waiting in the wings at every position.

James Collier can be contacted at collier41@marshall.edu.

Marshall defense turns up the Heater

By JAMES COLLIER
FOR THE PARTHENON

After a deplorable showing by Marshall University football’s defense in 2012, Coach Doc Holliday made a decision to turn on the heater—literally.

Chuck Heater took the helm of the defense in January 2013 in hopes of turning around a depleted unit that seemingly found a way to lose more games than it won. In 2012, the Herd finished 5-7 and did not qualify for a bowl game.

In only one year at the controls, Heater’s defense has made a miraculous turnaround.

After surrendering more total points than it scored during the 2012 season, Marshall’s defense caught everyone by surprise in 2013. The Herd allowed only 22.9 points per game, down from a daunting 43.1 points per game it allowed in 2012 and took a much needed load off the offense’s shoulders.

However, the 37-year veteran coach wants his team to trim even more.

“Last season, 18 or better got you into the top 10,” Heater said. “If we can get to 18, we’re good.”

While not perfect last season, the defense was pretty good by many standards. Its 20.2 point differential marked the biggest scoring defense jump in major college football since the 1997 and 1998 seasons when Central Michigan improved by 20.5 points per game.

Having the right players on the field certainly helped with

that, too.

During the 2012 season, Marshall lost linebackers Evan McKelvey and Billy Mitchell to injuries, forcing DJ Hunter and Devin Arrington to accept new roles on the field with the only remaining starting linebacker being Jermaine Holmes. This leaves the Herd’s secondary—mostly its safeties—to pick up the slack.

Safeties Dominick LeGrande and Okechukw Okorooha tallied 240 of the team’s 1073 total tackles (22.4 percent) as offenses consistently busted deep into the defensive coverage, more importantly, its last line of defense.

The end result from the Herd’s injury woes: undersized players playing out of position and opposing offensives thrashing the Herd’s defense on a weekly basis.

No wonder Marshall gave up 43-plus points a game.

So why the drastic change in 2013? Herd linebacker coach Adam Fuller summed it up in two words—Doc Holliday.

“The reason things changed was because of the great recruiting of Doc Holliday,” Fuller said. “A great recruiting effort by Doc Holliday of getting the right guys to do the job. Bringing in Neville Hewitt and McKelvey was big. What Hewitt brought to the table was a real effort type player with great skill.”

That may be one of the understatements of the year.

McKelvey, in his first full year with Marshall, led the team in tackles with 97, including five for loss. The then junior also picked off a pass and forced a fumble.

Talk about making a statement.

“I’m not sure there was a linebacker in C-USA that played better than he did,” Fuller addwd. “He was a kid that we could rely on at all points to make a bunch of plays.”

But it was not all on McKelvey. He had plenty of back-up and all he had to do was look to his right or left to find fellow linebackers Hewitt and Holmes.

Hewitt tallied 85 tackles, 2.5 sacks and 3.5 tackles for loss while Holmes recorded 84 tackles, 8.5 for loss and two sacks. Altogether, last season’s Herd linebackers accounted for 266 of the team’s 1,104 (24.1 percent) total tackles. That is 266 plays that never made its way into the Herd secondary—a place teams consistently stayed.

But with the front seven of Marshall’s defense holding down the offensive attack, it was finally the secondary that reaped the benefits. Last season, Marshall’s secondary had 10 of the teams 18 interceptions. That is one more than the entire team compiled in 2012.

Even more, with an abundance of true corners and safeties, Heater was allotted the chance to move redshirt junior D.J. Hunter, and his 50 tackles last season, back to his natural position of linebacker. More importantly, it moves Hunter closer to the ball.

“We felt like getting him closer to the line would help him,” Heater said. “He’s a very talented player so we organized ourselves in a way to get him out there and take advantage of his skill set.”

Hunter welcomed the move in hopes of bettering the team.

“I played as a linebacker in high school, so that’s a natural position for me,” Hunter said. “I’m aggressive and like to be around the ball.”

Herd redshirt sophomore A.J. Leggett spent last season with Hunter playing in the secondary. Leggett said he likes knowing what the guy in front of him has to offer.

“With D.J. moving up to linebacker, it lets me fly around and just play fast,” Leggett said.

But with all the pieces finally seeming like they are falling into place for the Herd’s defense, there is still one question left to be answered. Why can’t the defense stop teams on the road?

Last season, Marshall outscored teams 317-79 at the Joan.

However, those numbers changed drastically with the Herd giving up 205 points when it traveled away from Huntington. That is an increase of 38.5 percent.

While Heater certainly wants his team to strive for greatness, he certainly understands change does not happen overnight.

“We took a step last year, but certainly weren’t perfect,” Heater said. “We have to get to a point where we give our team an opportunity to win every game. If the defense plays well, no matter what happens in between, you have a chance to win the game. I’ve been around those kinds of defenses and I hope that’s what we become. We have to be consistent and the team knows it can count on us.”

After coaching on three national championship teams, Heater should know all about “those kinds of defenses.” Now can he find a way to inject that consistency into the Herd?

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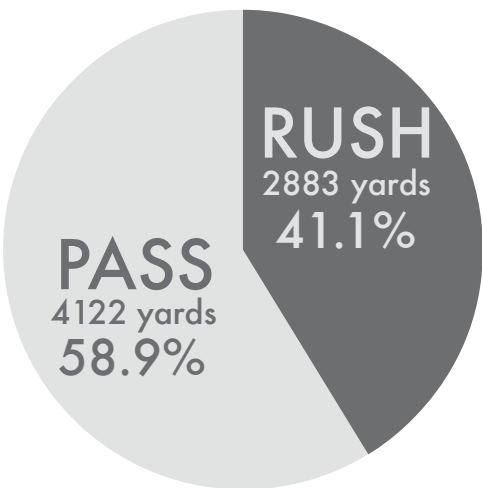
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THUNDERING HERD STATS 2013 SEASON

TACKLES PER GAME

MU 79

OPP 74



POINTS PER GAME

MU 42.1

OPP 22.9

OFFENSIVE PRODUCTION

RUSHING

S. Butler (765 yards)

R. Cato (294 yards)

R. Watson (120 yards)

RECEIVING

T. Shuler (1165 yards)

C. Wilkins (408 yards)

D. Johnson (218 yards)

DEFENSIVE PRODUCTION

TACKLES

E. McKelvey (97)

N. Hewitt (85)

C. Tindal (61)

SACKS

J. Rouse (6.0)

R. Myers (4.5)

G. Thompson (3.0)

statistics and roster information courtesy of HerdZone



Marshall students cheer on the Herd at the Joan C. Edwards Stadium as the team took on the Gardner-Webb Bulldogs Saturday, September 8, 2013.

FILE PHOTO

Herd fans prepare for highly anticipated 2014 season

By LACHEL HOUSE
FOR THE PARTHENON

Picture this: Marco, a brand new green turf and a packed stadium. The smell of popcorn, funnel cakes and cotton candy fill the air, while the sound of thunderclaps and musical instruments played by the band electrify the ears of those in attendance. The fans will come and the Joan will be revived. This is the moment Herd fans have been waiting for. The most anticipated season in Marshall University history is about to begin.

Yes, you read that right. The 2014-2015 Marshall football season has been a conversation carried by the mouths of people nationwide. Quarterback Rakeem Cato has found his way into the pre-season Heisman Trophy race, with sources such as college football writer Mike Huguenin explaining the possibilities of Cato's ultimate rise to fame. Along with this, USA Today ranks the football team number 20.

Marshall students gave a little insight about how they felt about the upcoming season, as well as a few football-related topics.

Mariah Robinson, freshman nursing major at Marshall, has never attended a football game, but made it clear why she was excited.

"I have not attended a football game, so the first home game will be my first," Robinson

said. "I really am looking forward to us going undefeated this year."

Derek Behr, junior criminal justice major, was asked who his favorite player was and why.

"My favorite player is Jean Louis," Behr said. "He is from my hometown and our high schools played each other."

Not everyone is as excited about the football season, however. Sophomore Joshua McDowney, explained that his heart belongs to another sport on campus.

McDowney said he finds rugby more entertaining, but also speaks with the football players, allowing him to remain up to date on the football season.

Davontae' Edwards, a senior criminal justice major, revealed that his most memorable game was the last time Marshall met West Virginia University on the turf. Along with that, he gave a prediction for the Herd's first game.

"We will win 42-7," Edwards said.

Marshall's football team kicks its season off in Ohio against Miami (Ohio) at 3:30 p.m. Be sure to tune in to the opening of the most anticipated season in Herd football history. Buckle your seatbelts, Herd fans. It is going to be a wild ride.

Lachel House can be contacted at house13@marshall.edu.

A Herd fan shows his support for the team with a bright green mohawk and football pads at the 2013 Marshall v. ECU game on November 29.



FILE PHOTO

FOOTBALL EDITION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2014 | THE PARTHENON | MARSHALLPARTHENON.COM

A whole new ballgame

Coach, quarterback have changed since the last Marshall-Miami game

By **BRAXTON CRISP**
FOR THE PARTHENON

Last year Marshall University trampled Miami (Ohio) 52-14 in Huntington, but not much is the same from last year's Miami squad roster. Gone are coach Don Treadwell and quarterback Austin Boucher.

Former Notre Dame offensive coordinator Chuck Martin and a quarterback he and the rest of southwest Ohio, are very familiar with, Andrew Hendrix have taken their place.

A graduate transfer from the Fighting Irish, Hendrix is originally from Cincinnati and attended the football powerhouse in the Buckeye State, Moeller High School.

Marshall head coach Doc Holliday said while Hendrix never panned out in South Bend, that does not mean he will be unsuccessful playing for the RedHawks.

"Anytime you add a big-time quarterback like Andrew Hendrix, it's a problem for us," Holliday said. "He played last year at Notre Dame in critical roles. He actually played at Southern Cal, played not mop-up time, but time when the game was on the line. He can make all the throws, he's very athletic and we'll have our hands full with him."

For the Herd, there are some new faces who will see the field Saturday. One of them is outside receiver Angelo Jean-Louis, who Holliday said gets

the starting nod over veteran Craig Wilkins because of his consistent production.

"At the receiver position, it's not how many snaps you play or how you grade out, but how many plays you make," Holliday said.

"If you get the opportunity to make 20 plays and you make 18 of them, chances are you can kind of tell by that production chart who has made plays throughout fall camp and who is the most productive guy. Because production is what matters at those skill positions, not potential."

On defense, Monterius Lovett is gone for Marshall, and Corey Tindal is taking over his spot. So who will be in the mix at nickel back? True freshman Antavis Rowe.

"Most of the time when you talk about playing freshmen, you like for them to prove themselves on special teams," Holliday said. "He earned our trust on special teams from the get-go, so we can actually get him in the game. He's a talented guy who we think can help us there."

Martin knows that to beat Marshall, the RedHawks have to disrupt Rakeem Cato like so many teams the last two years have tried to do, with little success. He said that disguising coverages will be a big part of the plan to slow Cato.

"It starts with the quarterback, trying not to let him know

exactly what he's got before the snap," Martin said. "He's a pretty experienced kid, he's a pretty smart kid, we'll try to mix up fronts and coverages enough so at least he's got to read on the fly, which he's more than capable of doing, but at least you're not making it easy on him."

Martin added that Cato is not a stationary quarterback by any stretch of the imagination.

"I've seen him make many people miss, running around in the backfield, then he takes off and runs it down the field," Martin said. "So to say one guy is going to tackle him on a regular basis is pretty unrealistic. That's where the pursuit factor has to come in, to give ourselves a chance at limiting him."

Martin said that getting pressure on Cato may not even be enough Saturday.

"He's good when his read is there, or when it looks good, he still can beat you," Martin said. "When you're really defending well and you stop his initial stuff, he's even better. The great quarterbacks a lot of times are like that. That's a big time challenge right off the bat, and he's on the Heisman watch list for a reason."

As for how the game plays out, the world will just have to wait until a steamy and hot Saturday afternoon in Oxford, Ohio.

Braxton Crisp can be contacted at crisp23@marshall.edu.



MARCUS CONSTANTINO | THE PARTHENON

Marshall linebacker Neville Hewitt charges toward Miami (Ohio) quarterback Austin Boucher during the Thundering Herd's 52-14 win in the 2013 season opener at Joan C. Edwards Stadium.

Herd's upcoming season attracts national attention

By **BRAXTON CRISP**
FOR THE PARTHENON

A lot can happen in a college football off-season, some good and some bad. For Marshall University, the litany of players being named to preseason watch lists and to preseason all-conference lists is quite literally as long as my arm. A lot of that talk is not only coming from relatively unknown prognosticators, but from some big-name national outlets.

Dennis Dodd from CBS Sports picked the Thundering Herd to finish eighth in his preseason picks. He said the Herd's weak schedule, plus a strong returning group of players could make this season a special one.

"I think they should go undefeated," Dodd said. "If they do, they'll end up in the top ten because there will only be a handful of undefeated teams and they can't be ignored, and if they do lose then they deserve to plummet because of that schedule."

That schedule includes the Miami (Ohio) RedHawks, who have lost 16 consecutive games, FCS opponent Rhode Island, who was picked No. 11 out of 12 teams in the Colonial Athletic Association, among a weakened Conference USA

slate with East Carolina and Tulsa moving to the American Athletic Association.

Dodd said a major component to that success will be Rakeem Cato, based not on his speed and size, but his mindset.

"I think it's his resiliency," Dodd said. "He's not physically imposing, I think it's his stick-to-it-iveness and where he came from that brought him to this point. He was 6-foot, 155 lbs. soaking wet coming out of high school. Bill Legg saw something, kept after him after he came from Florida International and then the natural development. Is he the most talented guy in the world? No, but he shows up. I think Woody Allen once said that 80 percent of life sometimes is just showing up, and he shows up and he's good."

Phil Steele's annual magazine also talked highly of the Thundering Herd, and assistant editor Brandon Pertner said Marshall's schedule would not be considered so easy if Louisville was still coming to Joan C. Edwards Stadium like was originally scheduled.

Louisville's move to the ACC necessitated that the Cardinals play Notre Dame this year and drop a non-conference game.

They decided to reschedule with the Herd for a later year.

"A win against a Louisville team that I still think is 7-5 or 8-4 caliber in their first year in the ACC would have done wonders for Marshall," Pertner said. "If that game would have been at home, I maybe even would have favored the Thundering Herd. What they did at home last year against their opponents, particularly against a very good East Carolina team that beat North Carolina and North Carolina State—blowing them out at the end of the year—I probably would have favored Marshall in that game by 3 points over Louisville."

As for the teams that the Herd will play this year, that easy schedule could prove to be harder than what it looks like now, based on how teams perform throughout the year. Pertner said one of those teams is the Herd's first opponent, Miami.

"I think Miami (Ohio) is much improved over their 0-12 season," Pertner said.

"Now I don't think it's a five or six win team, but I think they're going to go from zero to three or four wins. They have a Notre Dame transfer in Andrew Hendrix as quarterback, two

additional Notre Dame transfers, 15 returning starters. And I love their new head coach Chuck Martin. That's a much improved Miami (Ohio) team from last year."

Another game he said could give the Herd fits, but also help Marshall's strength of schedule, is Akron.

"I would say the most dangerous game on the entire schedule is after Marshall is looking for revenge over Ohio, who has gotten them the last couple of years, then the follow it up with a road trip to Akron," Pertner said.

"An Akron team that I think is a sleeper in the Mid-American Conference and has a lot of talent, obviously a great coaching staff at that particular level to get the Bowdens (head coach Terry and assistant Jeff) and then to have Chuck Amato as one of your defensive coordinators. And Akron is a team that won its last three games last year."

With that being said, now all that can be done is to see how the 2014 season plays out and if it plays out like the experts say it will.

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