

**GREENWOOD, S.C.** – The Erskine Flying Fleet fell in their historic home opener versus Shorter University, 24-13 on Saturday at J.W. Babb Stadium.

Here's everything coach Shap Boyd along with quarterback Craig Pender, wide receiver Senika McKie and linebacker Nolan Holloway had to say.

**ERSKINE SPORTS INFORMATION  
FOOTBALL  
SHORTER UNIVERSITY AT ERSKINE POSTGAME MEDIA  
March 13, 2021  
J.W. BABB STADIUM – GREENWOOD, S.C.**

**Erskine Head Coach – Shap Boyd**

**Coach what were the differences from the first and second half, especially in the red zone offensively you came up short on a couple key drives and they got that early score on you. What changed from the first half to the second half to get over that hump, to get in the end zone and what were some of the struggles there early on?**

**Boyd:** "I'm not seeing a lot of the other side of the ball at this point, we've got so much going on with our side. I'll be honest with you, I don't have a real good assessment of what was taking place. I do know this, when we have opportunities to make plays, we need to make plays. I can tell you that on both sides of the ball. When we have opportunities to make plays we're not making all the plays we should make. I didn't see anything change from the first half to the second half to be honest with you. We got to play better. I'm not talking about fancy stuff, I'm just saying the basics, the blocking, the tackling the basics. Doing the things that good football players do. We have to be more consistent with some of those things. I think when we can get our kids to stay within themselves and do what they can do, then I think we're going to be okay. I think right now we have some kids that are freelancing at times and that puts us in a bind. They go this way, when their gap is over here, that presents problems. We're leaving too many plays out there. When we're not good enough to just line up and beat you, we cannot afford to leave plays and we're leaving too many plays, whether it's on offense or defense."

**What was today like, just being a part of the home opener, first time in 70 years. When you look back 10 years down the road, what are you going to remember the most about this? Obviously, you wanted to get a win, but what are you going to remember most about today?**

**Boyd:** To me, the setting. My wife is highly involved in all this stuff and I think she's just done an awesome job pulling this all together. We haven't played in front of any body. We've been in two different states and lined up in front of empty stands. We really haven't played a game in front of people and that looked like a football game. That was a crowd. It probably could've been more if we weren't worrying about the COVID protocols. The setting is what I'm going to remember. Do I think we performed particularly well in that setting, no. But the setting was awesome. The presentation is something that we can look forward to and certainly the next time

we have a home game, this is a great field. I've been at a lot of different places, a lot of different levels and that was as good an environment as you're going to get in small college football."

**I know you've coached up your players to not think "oh we're a startup program," you've obviously done the opposite of that and it shows in their play. To go out and see them execute that, you conceivably could be 2-1 or 3-0. They've played pretty well through the first three games, all things considered. Talk about the mentality of your team not playing like a startup program. They look like they belong out there with seniors and juniors from the other side.**

**Boyd:** "I've told them from the jump that that wasn't going to be an excuse. I told them I would not step up here and talk to you all and blame their youth and their inexperience for the mistakes and for the losses. I've taken that off the table. I've told them there's no way. We want to win, but winning is not my objective right now. My objective is to try to get us to play hard. And we can play hard for 60 minutes, we're going to win. Now, we have to play hard for 60 minutes and execute a little bit better. I've taken that aspect off the table, I've never even given them the opportunity to use that as an excuse and we're not going to. I think we should've beaten that team. I certainly think we were capable of beating that team and that team has been playing football a heck of a lot longer than we have. I'm not pleased, I'm not happy, I'm not looking for a positive anything out of this, they are playing and trending exactly like I expect them to, with the exception that I always want to minimize mistakes and we're not doing that. That part is youth and inexperience. As far as how they are playing and performing, they are playing hard. They are lining up and getting to do the things that we wanted and have asked them to do. No excuses. We got beat by a team that beat us."

**Can you talk about Senika McKie's performance tonight? I mean having 200 yards receiving is pretty incredible.**

**Boyd:** "I know that if you've had one person that's been fairly consistent throughout all the games, he would be that guy. He's been that guy who's been there in all three of the games. Other people kind of disappear at times and then step up at times, but he's not leaving a lot of stuff on the field. We have other people that do. We're blessed to have him. I think the sky's the limit with Senika. I think he gets down on himself. I want him to stay a little more positive about some of the things that don't go his way. I am big about demeanor and how you present yourself on the field and I want him to hold his shoulders high and understand that he's not going to play a perfect game. There's going to be mishaps and things that go wrong, but I still want him to stand tall and realize 'I'm going to get the next one.' He's certainly been a light in our program. I think the future is bright."

## **Erskine Student Athletes – Craig Pender, Senika McKie, Nolan Holloway**

**What was it like being out there for the first home game in 70 years, being part of this today and a huge moment for the school and you guys and the program?**

**Pender:** “You know, it sucks we didn’t come out on top, you know to play at home for the first time in 70 years and have that atmosphere, it was a great atmosphere, but it does suck that we came out on the wrong end of it.”

**McKie:** “Amazing experience. The people and the community because we haven’t had this in 70 years so it’s an amazing experience just to come out here and have a football game and be part of the program.”

**Holloway:** “It was a really great experience, we definitely felt support from the community and the people who’ve been waiting on Erskine football and who’ve been excited about it a long time. Glad I could experience it and it’s unfortunate we came out with the loss, but the atmosphere was great tonight.”

**Really tight games these first three games, is there a moment where you look up and if that one play had gone right, do you feel like you’re that close to being 3-0 or what’s the feeling like amongst your teammates?**

**McKie:** “Everyone knows we’re a young team but we don’t look at it that way, we can’t look at it that way, we have to go toe to toe with everybody. Every game is still a learning experience. We learn every play; one play you don’t get you have to move on and go to the next play but tomorrow we’ll watch film and see what we did and get it the next time we go out.”

**Pender:** “Getting past that play when we might do something wrong, we are neck in neck the last three games. We just go back tomorrow and get back in the weight room, study and see what we can improve on and get ready for next Saturday.”

**Holloway:** “It doesn’t boil down to a certain play that we missed or something like that, we’re definitely out to be competitive, we’re not out to be that start up program on the schedule. We need to work on our mental discipline and increase our focus, we’re going to make some changes and get on a roll here.”

**Craig and Senika with the offense, in the first half especially, what were some of the struggles in the red zone? Obviously, you guys made some really good long drives but then had to settle for field goals, what kind of changed in the second half to get that scoring drive and what did you think were some of the struggles early on?**

**Pender:** “Our drive starts and we’d get down the field and we were rolling. Everything we had game planned for we were getting and we just stalled out in the red zone. It’s disappointing, but it’s also a chance for us to learn. Stalling out in the red zone does hurt, but we’re be alright. I think the later and later we get into the season and the more we mature, the more we’ll be able to put the pedal down and get in the end zone.”

**McKie:** “Execution. That’s a big word that we use. The play calling was there, the looks were there, we practiced it all week we knew what they were going to give us, we just didn’t execute like we wanted to.”

**It’s been mentioned that you’re a relatively young team but at the same time you guys seem to click pretty quickly with the no huddle offense, which isn’t easy to run especially for a brand-new program and a younger team, what’s been the biggest factor in you guys gelling at such a young early stage in the season?**

**McKie:** At first it was tough, (Craig) keeps the defense on their toes, doesn’t allow them to sub, doesn’t allow them to get ready, or get calls from the sideline. We’ve been going at it for two years and we’ve been practicing it every day and we have the hang of it. We just have to execute. That’s the biggest word we use. Execute.”

**Pender:** “Execution is key. When I got here in August, taking over the fast-paced offense, I loved it. It does really keep defenses on their toes. Not really being able to set coverage, we don’t see as many fronts as mature teams.”

**The chemistry between you two seems to be really good, to have a go-to guy, how did that come about so quickly?**

**McKie:** “Practice. We’ve been practicing every day, we talk to each other and hang out off the field so that helps. After every practice we get some balls and work on routes and timing and we have a connection.”

**Pender:** “I trust this dude. So what that we’re freshmen, redshirt freshmen, I’d put this guy against almost any corner, that’s how much I believe in him. He’s that guy for me. Everyone else, all the other receivers too, but me and (Senika) since I got here in August, we’ve been just been building this chemistry since then.”

**The first year is supposed to be you take your lumps, you get beat up, a lot of programs go 0 for the season. It’s pretty obvious watching you guys that that’s not good enough for Shap, not good enough for you all, talk about that attitude, that feeling in the locker room, do you feel you deserve to be a .500 team or better?**

**Holloway:** “Yeah, definitely. Since the day we came in it’s been the standard, we have a winning standard. We don’t call ourselves freshmen, we don’t refer to ourselves as a startup team, we are a football team, we have a schedule against other football teams and we’re here to win. That’s been the mindset ever since we got here. We’ve never taken the field or practice field with the expectation that we’re going to field a team on Saturday and get beat up on. This is a very serious program. We want to be good, we work very hard. We are not going to be a typical startup team. We’re here to compete and that’s the standard that’s been set and that’s the standard that we’re going to play to.”

**McKie:** “These guys they have that dog mentality, that everybody needs so no matter who’s in

front of us, no matter how old, no matter what year, no matter what program, we're going to give it all we got and play our hearts out."

**Pender:** "Coach Boyd emphasizes playing for 60 minutes and that's what we're going to do. I give a lot of respect to these who've been here for two years, they've been grinding. The recruiting pitch for me was coming here and make history, win football games. That's what we're trying to do, we're not going to roll over and get hit in the face by anybody. We're trying to hit them in the mouth first."

### **Erskine versus Shorter**

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