

Syracuse 'fighting and playing' as it looks to snap its four game losing streak

By Leah Masi

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — With just a handful of games remaining in the regular season, head coach Fran Brown is focused on growth, especially among his younger players, emphasizing that even in defeat, there's always a lesson to be learned.

"Whether it's winning or if it's losing, the adversity piece of it is really good," Brown said.

Syracuse is on a four-game losing streak following their loss to Georgia Tech, the longest in Brown's tenure with the Orange. But he says there's something for both players and coaches to gain from it.

"It's good for leadership," Brown said. "For me to be able to show you guys how I keep our football team together and how we'll continue to work and continue to do things."

He added that lessons can come from anywhere, even just watching film.

"You become a little bit tougher, a little bit more resilient," Brown said. "I think the players are naturally resilient. I'm the one that's probably more hurt."

Brown said his priority is making sure the team continues to learn every day.

"We're just fighting and playing," Brown said.

Regarding the quarterbacks, Brown said they are in a developmental phase.

"It's a process," Brown said. "Sometimes you've got to take some of the punches."

Starting quarterback Rickie Collins said his focus is on learning how to play more efficiently.

"We can't kill our own momentum," Collins said. He added he's been making a conscious effort to protect the football. Since his first career start with the Orange against Duke, he's thrown eight interceptions. He said he wants to give the team a better chance to win and make plays.

"We've got to start faster and finish better," Collins said ahead of this week's game against the University of North Carolina.

Brown hasn't stopped believing in him over the past few weeks, saying that trust has allowed younger players to gain valuable experience.

“I felt that they were ready for the stage,” Collins said. “They came in and made their plays when their number was called, so that was good to see. That’s good for our offense to have depth like that — especially in young guys.”

No. 7 Georgia Tech didn’t stop some of the youngest players on Syracuse’s roster from making their mark. After suffering a fibula fracture in training camp, freshman Darius “Boobie” Johnson recorded his first career reception.

Tylik Hill saw the field again after his debut against Colgate earlier this season, recording four rushing attempts for 23 yards on Saturday. Bryon Washington also had a substantial number of snaps on offense.

On defense, Kaylib Singleton recorded two tackles, bringing his season total to six when combined with his performance against Colgate. Davion Kerr added one tackle, giving him 12 total this season.

“You’ll continue to see a lot of freshmen play,” Brown said.

Before the season started, Brown emphasized his desire to get younger players involved early. He said they’re good football players who are still learning the playbook.

“As they learn the playbook, they learn to handle the academic piece along with football,” Brown said.

Looking ahead, Brown said he’s excited for the opportunity this weekend.

“We’ll stay up, be positive, and keep working,” Brown said. “They know [the team] there’s a bright future ahead of us.”

The Orange will take on the Tar Heels on Friday, Oct. 31, with a kickoff set for 7:30 p.m. EST at the JMA Wireless Dome. The matchup will air on ESPN.