One game is not a season

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The predominantly orange clad crowd in the Georgia Dome exhaled a chorus of relief after Tennessee toppled N.C. State, 35-21, in the season opener for both teams.

Vols Coach Derek Dooley's seat cooled considerably while N.C. State's Tom O'Brien's seat was noticeably warmer than when he arrived in Atlanta.

Preseason expectations were high in Raleigh. Their fans were banking on a strong secondary and the play of senior quarterback Mike Glennon.

In Knoxville, expectations ran the gamut. Truth be told, no one knew how their heroes would play in the season opener, much less beyond that.

Dooley has taken a lot of heat, but reasonable fans were willing to watch this season play out before rendering judgment.

After the Vols had picked Glennon off four times and receivers ran by NFL cornerback prospect David Amerson, Vols fans were breathing easier.

Ah, but one game does not a season make.

O’Brien passed off the game as a good team having a bad night. He said he could see the Wolfpack winning 11 games. O’Brien might consider Lasik surgery. The ACC can’t be that bad.

Dooley was cautiously optimistic. This was one of those swing games that can make or break a team. He and the players have to feel good about the outcome.

Junior college transfer Cordarrelle Patterson was as good as advertised. He had no trouble taking his game to the next level, from the anonymity of junior college games to college football’s biggest stage.

We knew quarterback Tyler Bray’s talent allows him to make all the throws, especially the downfield bombs he drops in a receiver’s hands in full stride.

It still promises to be a season where the offense is going to have to outscore opponents. The defense is energetic, but still a work in progress under first-year coordinator Sal Sunseri.

Tennessee must guard against falling asleep on Georgia State in the home opener. Georgia State’s coach is Bill Curry, who knows all about the SEC after head coaching jobs at Alabama and Kentucky.

Curry is calling it quits after this season and the former undersized center that started for the legendary coach Vince Lombardi and Green Bay Packers, would like nothing better than to get a signature win over the Vols.

Dooley is pointing to two areas as his team evolves.

“I want to see how much improvement we make from the first game to the second, which is where teams are supposed to make the most improvement,’’ Dooley said at his Monday presser.

“And we need to try to find out the standard of how we perform every week. That’s step two in proving we are a good football team.’’

Dooley is concerned about the lack of a power ground game, especially on short yardage attempts.

“It was not a surprise,’’ Dooley said. “We have got to stick it in there.’’

Senior fullback/tight end Ben Bartholomew knows the Vols have to knock opponents off the ball.

“In short yardage, we had a couple of situations where we kinda left some things on the field,’’ the MBA product said. “We got those corrected and I think it will pay off in the long run.’’

Georgia State could present an opportunity for Dooley to play a lot of players in the home opener. Curry’s team was soundly beaten by S. C. State, 33-6.

It’s the next game in a long season.

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