

WEST VIRGINIA

The Mountaineers will take to the air to take the Big East

► **Dana Holgorsen** leaped at the chance. On June 13, three days after being promoted from offensive coordinator to Mountaineers coach, he was on a fishing trip when he got an offer to go skydiving with the Army's parachute team. A day later he was hurtling above West Virginia's New River Gorge at 180 mph. Now Holgorsen—a Mike Leach disciple known as one of the nation's brightest offensive minds—is ready to take to the air again.

Hired away from his job as Oklahoma State's offensive coordinator last Dec. 15 to be coach-in-waiting behind Bill Stewart, Holgorsen rose to the position a year early, after Stewart was forced to resign on June 10. Over Holgorsen's last six seasons at Texas Tech, Houston and Oklahoma State, every quarterback running his high-speed spread has passed for at least 4,000 yards. Last year, Holgorsen's first in Stillwater, the Cowboys were third in the FBS in yardage (520.2 per game) while ranking 110th in time of possession (27:41).

That sort of high-flying attack should breathe life into the Mountaineers, who ranked 59th, 61st and 67th in total offense in Stewart's three full seasons with the Mountaineers. It should also turn junior quarterback Geno Smith into a household name. "The biggest thing is [Smith] getting on the same page as the guys he's throwing to," Holgorsen says. "That's something that has to happen over time."

The 6' 3", 214-pound Smith, who threw for 2,763 yards last season, as well as 24 touchdowns, knew nothing of Holgorsen's scheme before the coach's arrival. But while the system may seem complex from the outside, Smith found it easy to learn. "It was not really a challenge," he says, "because he doesn't ask much of me but to pay attention and run the offense. My job is to just go out there and make the reads that are within our system."

And Smith isn't concerned with setting records. "The only statistics that I worry about are wins and losses," he says. "I feel like as long as we come out with a victory, then I'm O.K. with it."

—Cory McCarty



JEANINE LEECH/ICON SMITH (SMITH); DERICK E. HINGLE/U.S. PRESSWIRE (IRVIN)

Smith is the school's first QB in 12 seasons to eclipse 2,500 passing yards—and in the new high-octane system, he could easily throw for more than 4,000.

Schedule

SEPTEMBER
 4 Marshall
 10 Norfolk State
 17 at Maryland
 24 LSU

OCTOBER
 1 Bowling Green
 8 Connecticut
 21 at Syracuse
 29 at Rutgers

NOVEMBER
 5 Louisville
 12 at Cincinnati
 25 Pittsburgh

DECEMBER
 1 at South Florida

Key Players

TAVON AUSTIN
 WR, Junior
 He could shatter Mountaineers' single-season record for catches (77) as the inside receiver in this spread offense.

DON BARCLAY
 LT, Senior
 The 6' 4", 310-pound tackle will anchor a unit that should thrive in the new offensive system.

BRUCE IRVIN
 DE, Senior
 A pass-rush specialist who played just 225 snaps, he led the Big East in sacks (14) last season.

Fast Facts

Conference
 Big East
Coach Dana Holgorsen (1st year)
2010 Record 9–4 (5–2 in Big East)
Final AP Rank NR
Returning Starters 10
Offense 6, Defense 4

