

Published: 12.09.2006
UA FOOTBALL

Tuitama may be safer with new offense

JOHN MOREDICH

Tucson Citizen

Protecting quarterback Willie Tuitama is going to be crucial in Arizona's new, high-octane spread passing offense.

The first step toward Tuitama's long-term health is a visit to the highly regarded University of Pittsburgh Concussion Center next week.

The next step is to implement new coordinator Sonny Dykes' offense, which creates plenty of passing opportunities and few sacks.

"Willie is not injury-prone as some people are saying he is," said Lui Tuitama, Willie's father.

"He suffered two concussions this year. He is going to the University of Pittsburgh, which is the No. 1 concussion clinic in the country, where all the NFL guys go. We want to make sure Willie has all his faculties and there is no swelling on the brain and get him into spring ball all right."

UA coach Mike Stoops said Tuitama suffered three concussions - against LSU, UCLA and ASU. Tuitama said he took himself out of the Oregon game with temporary blurry vision but was not diagnosed with a concussion.

"He is fine. He has had no headaches. He didn't have a headache after the ASU game," Lui Tuitama said. "He just needs a little rest. We just need to find out what is actually going on. He is looking forward to next year."

Tuitama might feel more secure after visiting the Pittsburgh clinic, and he should feel better about how the offensive line will block next season.

The line, which featured three redshirt freshmen much of the season, has a year more experience. Better yet, the new scheme often calls for quick passes that don't allow time for the defense to hit the quarterback.

Texas Tech allowed a sack for every 35 pass attempts this season (17 sacks in 601 passes). Arizona was sacked once in every 11 passes, or 31 sacks in 356 passes.

"(The line) sees everything coming and who is protected and who is not. They have wide line splits that give the quarterback more time to throw," Stoops said.

"The throwing lanes are much bigger. It is very unique, but very effective. It will fit our personnel very, very well."