Virginia Muffles the Tech Explosion

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The argument, for the present, is over. State dominance has been established "Explosion '72", now little more than a low rumble, must be postponed, maybe canceled. And Don Lawrence, the Virginia coach who has been often maligned, really before he had a chance, is now on firm footing.

A lot was settled here Saturday, on a day when nothing was a factor except two slate football teams fighting to make a name for themselves. Virginia, with a deserved 24-20 victory over Virginia Tech, is now off to its best start in 12 years.

The Cavalier's, with a quarterback who was hurt, with a quarterback who was booted three minutes before the end of the second half, now have all the best of it. Tech, after an extensive promotional campaign, must struggle to save face.

The game, as always, was won on the field. Tech, like Virginia, accomplished nothing in the first period, but put two touchdowns together, one a gift, late in the second quarter and jumped to a 14-0 lead, before Virginia's Harri son Davis, booted before he started the drive, led the Cavaliers in for the key touchdown. And UV's trailed by only seven at the half.

Tech had spent all of spring and summer trying to find a way to establish a running game. The Hokies succeeded, but it was the pass from All-American candidate Don Strock which Tech badly needed. A fierce Virginia rush took care of that.

And in the second half particularly, Virginia's rush, led by Stanley Land, Billy Williams and Dick Ambrose, was the difference. Tech, victim of two interceptions, two fumbles and two key procedure penalties could establish nothing until Strock finally got the Hokies moving late in the game with a touchdown drive that didn't matter.

Behind 144, Virginia's Billy Maxwell kicked a 29-yard field goal, and 22,000 fans who jammed ancient Scott Stadium, the third largest crowd in Cavalier history, saw UVVA creep within four. And the.

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Times Photos by Jack Oaking

Story of the Game — Virginia's Stanley Land (99) Goes Gobbler Hunting and Nails Don Strock for 11-Yard Loss...
UVa Delays Explosion

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best, for the home team, was yet to come.

Nothing more of importance occurred until midway of the fourth period when Virginia got the ball on the Tech 48 and took four minutes to score. Davis found slotback Chuck Belic open down the middle and connected with a 20-yard scoring toss. Maxwell kicked the point, giving the Cavaliers a 17-14 edge.

Tech showed signs of moving the ball on the next series, but a Strock pass was tipped, then intercepted by Danny Blakley.

Tech had another chance to take the lead, but this time Strock fumbled. Chris Brown recovered and Virginia running back Kent Merritt scored standing up, from nine yards, as the Cavaliers eliminated the visitors.

Strock, then, directed the Hokies to a touchdown by completing five of six passes, the last one to Craig Valentine for the touchdown. But Virginia had the game locked up, so much that the Cavaliers’ second defense was in the game.

Davis, who shared the hero role with the UVa defense, was inconsistent, but he was very strong in the clutch. In the second-quarter touchdown drive, the one which got the Cavaliers back in the game, Davis completed seven passes, one a touchdown to Belic. Before the touchdown drive, however, Davis was only two for 12, including two interceptions.

Tech’s defense, certainly better than last year, did not play badly. It was the lack of a consistent offense which got the Hokies beaten.

“We have one of the best passers in America,” said Tech offensive coordinator Wally English, “and when it comes time for him to pass we have to be able to protect. Today, we didn’t protect.”

English said Virginia had an excellent pass rush, but he didn’t need to say it. It was obvious. Although Lawrence was extremely pleased with the victory, he said his team can play better.

“But we did have better executions today than we did against South Carolina,” Lawrence said. Lawrence called it one of the best “come-from-behind” wins in Virginia history.

Tech coach Charlie Coffey offered no excuses. “Virginia is a sound defensive team,” Coffey said. “They played well.”

Tech showed some running potential, using six backs in its first touchdown drive including freshman Paul Adams, who gained 72 yards on 13 carries.

“They gave us the run,” said Strock, who connected on 13 of 23 passes. “But the pass rush caused a lot of problems. They were ready for us and we didn’t win. It wasn’t a very good day.”

Virginia, Harrison Davis and Don Lawrence beg to disagree.