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The Virginia Tech football Gobblers, scrapping to break into the win column after successive losses to the University of Virginia and Florida State, open their home schedule Saturday with Southern Methodist.

Coach Hayden Fry's Mustangs present a different problem for the Gobblers, an outstanding ground game.

Both Virginia and Florida State used the passing game to down the Gobblers, but the Mustangs do it on the ground.

In two games, both victories, the Mustangs have run the ball 95 times, yet only two men did most of the work. Junior Alvin Maxon carried 48 times for 303 yards and six touchdowns. As a sophomore, Maxon went over the 1,000-yard mark. To complement Maxon, Fry has come up with a freshman, Wayne Morris, who toted the mail for 229 yards on 29 rushes.

"SMU is a fine team and their running game presents a different problem for us. Last week, we had to worry every time Gary Huff handled the ball, Saturday we'll have to stop the running game. Both Maxon and Morris are capable of breaking off the big run at any time."

The Gobblers have generated enough offense, 716 yards in two games, to post a victory, but they have turned the ball over nine times: four times on pass interceptions, five times on fumbles. Tech has not recovered one of its own fumbles in its two losses.

On the bright side, Coffey was enthusiastic over the play of safety man Jerry Scharnus of Newport News and Ferguson High School.

"Jerry got the highest grades I've ever seen for a safety man in a football game," Coffey enthused. "He only made one minor error and broke up three passes, made six unassisted tackles and had two assists. He did an outstanding all around job."

Scharnus wasn't overjoyed. "I should have intercepted a couple of those passes." Jerry will be a defensive co-captain this week.

Others who graded high according to Coffey were the six linebackers and wide receiver Kit Utz. "He graded well and impressed the coaches with his effort." Utz, a senior from Richmond, never played high school football and was a manager his first two years at Blacksburg.

"Our problem is that we haven't the confidence that comes with winning. We need to have a victory or two under our belt," Coffey added.

"We're not consistent. We do a lot of things right, then we make a mistake. Last week, we had six chances to score and didn't.

"We have to get ahead early, which will give our players the confidence they all need.

"Playing at home should help some. We don't have to get on a plane, Friday and sleep in strange beds, and having our own people instead of those Seminole drums behind us should make at least a little difference."