Tech Defense Not Lured Into Speed Trap

BLACKSBURG—When you are going against one of the fastest and quickest offenses in the nation, you just talk yourself into being a little bit faster and make up your mind you are going to attack the offense with reckless abandon.

Right?

Wrong.

"No, sir," explained Tom Shirley. "That would have been a big mistake. Our defensive coaches had warned us to play under control. Don't over-run the play... stay in position to have as much pursuit and support as we can on every play.

"If we were too quick and aggressive, they would have just broken a lot of long plays on us. You'll never know just how fast and fast they were.

"The coaching Shirley and his Virginia Tech defensive mate got last week was well received and their response was terrific. They all resulted in a tremendous D-10 victory over highly-regarded and previously unbeaten Southern Methodist University here Saturday.

"It was 90 times better than any win I have ever played a part in," said Shirley.

"We were playing under stress," said coach Charlie Coffey. "That's why it was the biggest win I have ever been associated with.

"The win halted a two-game losing start for the Hokies, who can now point with pride to their "Explosion" 72" slogan.

They Know They Can

Shirley was just one of many stars for the Techmen. He served as defensive captain and was credited, by pressbox, statistics, with 13 solo tackles, six assists and one pass block.

Donnie Sprouse were just three of the defensive stars who played major roles in the upset—which was being hailed by many Tech faithful as the school's finest win in many, many years.

Ellenhagen said he might begin a campaign to get a shot at wide receiver after he ran down SMU speedster Alvin Maxson on a 2-yard run.

"I wasn't running for the tackle," said Ellenhagen. "I was running for my life. I missed him once and I knew if I let him get away, I'd be dead. If I didn't catch him, I'd just kept running right out of the stadium.

"The over-all control the Tech offense put on the 9.5 Maxson might best illustrate the effectiveness of the defense. Maxson carried 25 times and only broke the 2-yard run.

In his other 27 carries, Maxson, the nation's leading scor-er who had a 135-yard game average, managed to average only one yard per try.

Neither Coffey nor any member of his staff or squad will have the cherished game ball. Coffey dug in his locker after the game and pulled out the ball.

"This is going to Dr. Hall, the president in the world," he said. "I'm going to get it all fixed up with the score and everything and give it to him."

It was left to Ellenhagen to sound a somewhat sobering note to the postgame celebration.

"Our defense was great," said the senior tackle. "I've always said it could be. But we have to improve a heck of a lot more if we hope to beat Boston.

"Boston will leave what goes on in Blacksburg when it's football time. The Corgans will get a firsthand report from our defense coordinator, who was there on a visit last week. They were here Saturday to observe the big victory and I've vowed not to let it happen to them this Saturday.

"I know you won't believe this," said Coffey. "But I was never worried. I knew our defense would hold. The only concern I had was the play to call when we got the ball." Shirley said he didn't remember who tackled the SMU quarterback on the last play but he thinks he got a shoulder into him.

"I don't know," he said. "And I don't remember anything but seeing he didn't get across. We began jumping around like mad. I guess we all were a little crazy. Oddly enough, the final two goal line plays were not in the Tech game film.

Strock Praises Defense

It was truly a defensive victory despite some good plays by Ben Strock and his offensive mates. But Strock was the first to claim it for the defense.

"I thought like everyone we laid an egg the defense would shut 'em off," Strock said. "I don't think I played an exceptional game but it must have been good enough. We won.

"I do know it was great because it will give us more faith in ourselves and in each other. I know our offense has great respect for the defense and I think the feeling is mutual. That's the kind of squad we are."

Just for the record, Strock hit on 16 of 29 passes for 206 yards and one touchdown.

J. B. Barber, the flashy junior halfback, picked up 72 yards running but claimed it was a bad afternoon for him.

"I recked," he said. "The holes were there. The line did a great job. But I just didn't run. It was like I had weights on my feet or something."

Hahn Gets the Ball

Tackle Bill Ellenhagen and line backers Kent Henry and Bob McLelland Sports Editor