Ellenbogen Helps Defense

By BOB McELLELLAND

World-News Sports Editor

Bill Ellenbogen says he’ll have to be a much smarter and more powerful player than he was a year ago if he hopes to help Virginia Tech stop the highly-regarded vein offense of the Houston Cougars in Blacksburg Saturday.

There might be some who claim for Ellenbogen to improve on his outstanding play in last Saturday’s big 13-10 upset of previously unbeaten Southern Methodist would be hard to do.

He was a defensive leader and received the highest grade from his coaches.

“I made a lot of mistakes against SMU that didn’t show up in the film,” said Ellenbogen, who is something of a perfectionist. “I just made up for them with extra effort and hustle. But I sure can’t do that against Houston.”

Ellenbogen then explained how the Houston veer will not allow a single mistake from the defense or it could easily result in a touchdown.

The bruising 6-3, 230-pound senior is a key man in the Tech game plans. He and John Sprenkle play the defensive tackle spots — the position where Houston will apply the pressure.

“They run their fullback right at the tackle,” Ellenbogen explained. “It’ll be our job to stop him and make the quarterback do something else with the football. We could make a lot of big plays but we could easily be the goats.

“We’ll have to be disciplined and do our individual jobs and not get carried away with the faking or playing of the quarterback.”

Doing the individual job is important in Tech’s defensive plan which operates on technique rather than free-lancing from the players.

Tech has been much more impressive on defense this season and Ellenbogen said the reasons are quite simple.

“First of all,” he said, “we have more experience. But the big reason is that we have more confidence in ourselves and in each other. Last year we all had our doubts. We were more worried about the guy next to us doing his job than we were with our own.

“We’d be running around trying to help out and consequently nothing got done. It was a big mess. But things are different this year.”

Ellenbogen came to Tech two years ago when Buffalo dropped football. He is a native of New Rochelle, N.Y., and actually was a football walk-on with an academic scholarship at Buffalo. He wasn’t even a regular in high school.

“I was awkward and slow in high school,” he explained. “But I grew up a lot before I got to Buffalo.”

He was a freshman regular, then had a redshirt season and then was regular on the varsity as a sophomore. He played in Blacksburg against Tech and was named the top defensive player in his area for his play in the 31-14 loss.

When Buffalo gave up football, he narrowed his future college plan to Tech and Miami of Florida. A visit from Tech assistant Jack Prater and Dan Henning led to his decision to attend Tech.

He would like to forget last season. He came to Blacksburg with a lot of publicity. He also did well in spring practice and continued to get the line.

Then trouble hit. He injured his back the first day of contact work and he sat out the first five games.

“When I got back, I lacked confidence and just didn’t play well,” he said. “It was just a bad year.”

Ellenbogen thinks he has his back trouble cured. He sleeps on his back with a board under the hard mattress and a support under his knee.

“It’s like sitting in a chair in bed,” he explained. “But it sure has helped my back.”

Bill McKenney likes to talk about Ellenbogen. He is impressed with his all-out effort. McKenney rates him a smart player who has a great attitude and desire to win.

“I suppose it is just the type of player we need to win here at Tech,” McKenney said. “He and the other seniors have been good examples for our young players. I know the game he had against SMU was something. We’ll need one even better if we hope to beat Houston, which despite its youthful look, is a much sounder and more capable team.

“They might be young,” he said. “But they have a world of potential. And they have had two weeks to get ready for us.”

Both Tech and Houston come in the game with 1-2 records. Tech lost to Virginia (24-20) and Florida State (27-15) before upsetting SMU. Houston lost its two games by a total of six points (15-13 to Rice and 33-28 to Arizona State). The Cougars blanked Tulsa 21-0 in their game two weeks ago.

New York (AP) — When Danny Sanspree is healthy, it’s most unhealthy for Auburn’s football opponents.

As a sophomore, he missed much of the 1970 season with a sprained knee but saw enough action against Alabama to grade the highest among Auburn’s defensive front four.

However, Sanspree reached his peak last Saturday in Auburn’s 10-6 upset of fourth-ranked Tennessee. He made 10 solo tackles, assisted on seven others and turned in six big plays. He dumped Tennesse’s e quarterback Condredge Holloway for losses of 12 and 14 yards, pinned a Vol runner for a 16-yard loss on a reverse, batted down two passes and recovered a fumble that set up Gardner Jett’s 30-yard field goal.

For that performance, the 6-foot-4, 231-pound senior from Atmore, Ala., was named today as National College Line- man of the Week by The Associated Press.

In winning Linebacker of the Week honors, Sanspree beat out an Auburn teammate in the nation’s top four linebackers: Ken Bernich, along with linebackers Lino Venerucci of Michigan State, Don Riggio of Western Michigan and Cleveland Yann of Oklahoma State; defensive linemen Gilbert Barnes and Barry Price of Oklahoma State.

J.L. Doak of Missouri, Rich Glover of Nebraska, Bill El- lenbogen of Virginia Tech, Malcolm Minnick of Texas and Raymond Hamilton of Oklahoma; light end Mike Creamy of Notre Dame, and split end Barry Smith of Florida State.