Houston Rally Ties Tech

By BILL BRILL
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BLACKSBURG — Houston coach Bill Yeoman had the perfect answer.

"I don't think the good Lord intended for anybody to lose this game."

Yeoman had just seen his Cougars lean all but destroyed by incredible Don Strock, battle back to the Virginia Tech, 27-27, here Saturday before 25,000 dazzled fans.

All that stood between the Cougars and victory was a simple extra point. But, with 1:15 left, Ricky Terrell's try sailed wide to the left and Tech salvaged at least a tie out of a game it apparently had won all day.

Strock put on one of the greatest passing shows in the history of college football. He picked apart the young Houston secondary for 327 yards, just 17 yards short of the all-time NCAA mark set by Cincinnati's Greg Cook against Ohio U. in 1966.

But for all of Strock's heroics, the Hokies turned out to be fortunate to get a deadlock because their backs have a horrible habit of coming unglued from the football.

Tech fumbled 18 times, making it 19 in two weeks, and finally the bobbles caught up with them.

Running back J. B. Barber, playing with a bad wrist, coughed up the ball six times, half of them recovered by the Cougars. Two of Barber's bobbles came inside the Houston five when the Hokies were apparently going in for scores.

"It's frustrating," admitted Tech coach Charlie Cofey. "It's a nightmare."

It's gotten so I'm afraid to run off-tackle. I'd prefer to pass. I'm even afraid to talk about it.

Cofey said Tech had run gauntlet drills all week, with the backs attacked by defenders, "and we had almost no fumbles. I just don't know what's causing them."

Whatever the reason, the fumbles raised what would have been a second glorious upset for Tech, which now must carry a 1-0-1 record into next Saturday's Homecoming contest with tough Oklahoma State.

Until Houston finally tied it on a 20-yard pass from quarter back D. C. Noble's split end Brian Williams, it appeared that defense had saved the Hokies again.

Just moments before, Tech had stopped Houston at the six when Noble's run on fourth down instead of throwing.

"We're so young," said Yeoman, "and we just have to learn. I'll guarantee you, Noble's will never run on fourth down again."

Ironically, Houston converted one of its own fumbles into the play that set up the tying touchdown.

After Tech took over on its 40, the Hokies punted and Williams dropped the ball. But he picked it up, avoided two tacklers and wiggled back 36 yards to the Tech 19.

The Cougars got it to the 20, and on first down, Noble's spotted Williams all alone for the TD. Terrell missed by a mile. It would have been the winner.

Barber even fumbled the kickoff at his seven. The ball was picked up by Nat Cooper and run back 45 yards.

Just one completion, and Strock would have put brother Dave within decent field goal range.

But this time Strock misfired on three tosses, Tech called time. Strock wanted to go for the first down, but Cofey overruled him.

Dave Strock tried for a 73-yard field goal that was short, landing in the end zone.

"It was a good kick," said Don Strock, "but, God, 73 yards is a long way."

"We didn't want to take a chance on leaving them in field goal range," explained Strock's Record Day Ruined by Fumbles

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Gobblers' Kent Henry (58) Breaks Up Pass Intended for Miller asasser to Temporarily Stall Houston in Fourth Quarter