Being The Favorite Is A New Role For Tech

By STEVE WAID

The Virginia Tech Bobcats head for something new Saturday afternoon at Feden Stadium in Steubenville, Ohio, where they will play Ohio University's Bobcats. For the first time this season, the Bobcats will be favored to win the ball game.

For head coach Charlie Coffey and his team, that seems pleasant enough. After all, when you are 5-2-0 against teams that were supposed to beat you, getting a game just an ordering sound like a dream.

"Favored or not," said Coffey, "we are always concerned about playing football, whenever you play. I know my team has been ready to play for four weeks now."

"You could speculate a ledetim, but I don't anticipate one," said Coffey. "I think our team is knowledgeable—they know you have to be ready to play regardless of which team you play or where you play."

"But it is Ohio's homecoming, and we know that beating home teams is hard to do."

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I think we have proven that the last three weeks ourselves."

One of the reasons the Bobcats are rated over Ohio is a rash of injuries that have plagued the Bobcats since the season started. Before the season even started, they lost Jim Kooslo, their No. 2 rusher last year who has put in a knee injury.

Then their top running back, Bill Gary, suffered a knee injury in the Bobcats' opener, which put him out of action for the season. Gary was the eighth leading rusher in the nation two years ago and figured heavily in the Bobcats' offensive plans.

To fill the gap left by Gary, coach Bill Hess moved a wide receiver to the backfield. Tim Wemer, who made the move, gained 235 yards in one game and then suffered a leg injury and is out for the season.

Incidents like these decimated what Hess called the "great group of runners and wide receivers we've had in years."

In all, when injuries to reserve players are thrown in, Hess has lost seven running backs and two receivers.

But there is one man in the Ohio backfield who promises to give Tech trouble—provided he plays. Rich Bevly, a sophomore quarterback, has become Ohio's leading rusher. With nearly 300 yards in rushing in his credit, and a fine passing arm that helped him oust a senior veteran from the starting role, Bevly is a double offensive threat.

But Bevly has suffered a leg injury, and is listed as a doubtful starter against Tech although the coaches will definitely put him in if they feel he can do the job.

"This Bevly is third in total offense this year," said Coffey, "and he is a fine runner, a quick runner. He throws well, too. If he can't find a receiver, he hesitates to run. That can be a problem."

Tech has one key injury. Defensive end Rich Easterling has a leg injury and will miss the game.

Coffey felt that another possible problem for the Techmen would be the defensive assignment of the Bobcats. "On defense," Coffey said, "Ohio has been using some fronts we haven't been up against all year. They change fronts often, and they jump defenses. They have multiple coverage on the pass like every other team we have faced this year, but their rushes are different, and our offense has had trouble adjusting all week in practice."

Despite the fact that Ohio's defense will be new to Tech, Bobcat coach Hess is not satisfied with it. He feels that execution on defense has been a problem all year, and he quite frankly blames it on a lack of ability.

"We'll probably have to rise to the best defense we've played all year if we want to be in the ball game," said Hess. "That Don Strock is the finest passer in college football I have seen in many years. There is no question that he is the key to the Tech offense."

"They have other strengths, though. Their receivers are exceptional, and they have a running game that is also excellent."

(C.B.) Barber and that young back (Paul) Adams are both strong ball carriers that work well with Tech's strong-block blocking offensive line."

Ohio is 5-3 on the season, and 1-2 in the Mid-American Conference. Hess felt that his team had done well to establish that record, considering the shifts he has had to make and the fact that he is short of personnel. "The Bobcats certainly have struggled, people," said Hess. "The tailback we'll use Saturday (sophomore L.C. Lyons) is a good tailback, but he ought to be playing behind someone like Gary so that he could learn a little more!"

Overall, the Bobcats feel good about Saturday, although they take nothing for granted. After some cardinal-aristocratic contests against Houston, SMU, and Oklahoma State the past few weeks at Lane Stadium, the challenge of the road and Ohio is something different indeed for the Hokies.