Tech leads nation in passing attack

By Wendell Weisend
VPI Sports Information

Virginia Tech is the nation's number one passing team, thanks in large measure to 6-5 quarterback Don Strock, who literally and figuratively towers over the 1972 college passing game.

"He's the perfect quarterback for our offense," asserts Coach Charlie Coffey. "I wouldn't trade him for anybody.

"He has great football awareness. He reads defenses and multiple pass coverages as well as some quarterbacks already in the pro leagues."

Strock, increasingly confident in his own ability to do his thing, has words of respect for both his receiving corps and entire offensive unit which has given him increasingly fine protection.

"I think our receivers are underrated. They run very disciplined routes, and they get open. It's my job to deliver the ball to them. They drop a few—but darn few. And they're getting better all the time at getting the most out of a completion.

"It took us a while to get the whole passing game working effectively, but our line protection has been great in the last four games, and I think our production has been just about maximum."

Maybe the biggest factor has been that Strock has shown no favoritism. He doesn't have to. Running back James Barber, Tech's leading receiver and ranked nationally before last Saturday's contest, didn't catch a pass against Ohio University—but then he didn't have to.

Barber ran 19 times for 89 yards and two tds while sophomore Ricky Scales, seniors Mike Burnop and Nick Colombo and sophomore Steve Galloway took care of the receiving.

Strock's four td passes against the Bobcats is a Tech record, and Scales also established a new Gobbler standard with three td catches among his five receptions. And Burnop, tight end, is now Tech's all-time career leader with 76 grabs.

Strock now holds all Tech passing marks, and what remains for the last four games is to see how much he'll add to about five of them-and to see whether he might write his name in the national record book. (He would like to improve slightly on his already fantastic 301.8 yards a game total offense.)

For all of that, Strock and the Techmen are most excited about finally having a winning record. It's the first time since the end of the 1968 season that it has been so for Tech, and it has been an especially long wait for Strock who was redshirted in 1969.

"I’m sure it has been a long grind for him, but I'm just as certain that it is now all worth it to him to have become the premier passer in all of college football," Coffey declares.

In the October 23 issue of "Sports Illustrated," brothers Dave and Don Strock were named as the "Backs of the Week."

"Sports Illustrated" awarded the award to the brothers for their performance during the Oklahoma State game, two Saturdays ago.

Coach Coffey was pleased with the announcement and said that he felt that Don Strock even had a chance at the Heisman Trophy for this year.

He added that though he could not comment on what records the boys may break, he felt that both players were in for a good year and was pleased for the both of them.