Bobcat Coach Hess
All Wet Over Strock

By BILL MILLSAPS

Don Strock is going to attack Ohio University's football defenses tomorrow afternoon, and Bobcat Coach Bill Hess is getting ready.

In a telephone conversation yesterday morning, Hess facetiously said that he had been "sneaking out to our field every night about midnight and wetting it down. I'm even thinking of having the sprinkler system working Saturday afternoon during the game."

Hess, in his 15th season as coach, has been burned by Strock once before; burned so badly he may be half-seriously wishing he could wage such wet, pre-game warfare on the Virginia Tech quarterback, now the National leader in passing and total offense.

Last fall in Blacksburg, Strock, completed 19 of 31 passes for 376 yards and three touchdowns as the 'Hokies' captured a 37-29 victory. The yardage total was the tall senior's career best until his output of 527 against Houston two weeks ago.

Tech coach Charlie Coffey said Strock's success against the Bobcats last year may have had something to do with their unfamiliarity with the passing game.

Even though Hess said, "Strock wasn't unknown to us," Coffey said that "it was an unusual situation. In their conference (Middle American), everybody runs the ball...off tackle right, off tackle left, the sprint draw. They hadn't played a good passing team until they came down here.

"It was strange to them. I don't think it will be strange to them Saturday. I think they're going to be a whole lot better."

If the Bobcats lose this battle to Tech and Strock (1:30 p.m. kickoff in Athens, Ohio), it won't be for lack of adequate preparation. "We've studied five movies of Strock," said Hess, whose team, now 3-3, lost a 37-7 decision to Miami (O.) last weekend.

"Strock is only a part, of course he's a big part, of what I think is a superb passing game," added Hess. "In the 200 passes they've called in the movies we've seen, Strock has been touched only seven times. He sets deep, about nine yards, and they give him fine protection."

Hess was an assistant coach at Miami University for seven years before he came to Ohio U. "While I was Ohio State," he said, "we played against John Brodie, Len Dawson and Milt Plum. Since I've been here, we've played against Bobby Douglas, Dan Darragh, Buster O'Brien, Bob Griese and Greg Cook.

"Strock is the finest passer I've seen, with the possible exception of Brodie. When you talk about Strock, you just run out of superlatives. He's a great one, in my estimation."

Coffey said he was "worried to death we're not ready. We had a bad practice Wednesday. For the last four weeks (the Hokies are now 2-1 and looking toward a big season), our kids have fought their families off."

The invigorating, last-minute victory over Oklahoma State was costly to the Hokies. Defensive end Rich Easterling, one of the bellwethers of the Tech defense, injured a knee and has it immobilized in a cast. "He won't make the trip with us," said Coffey. Defensive back John Bell is a doubtful participant, as is starting left offensive guard Steve Maguire.

"For the last four weeks, or since the second quarter of the Florida State game," said Coffey, "we have actually acted like a football team. We've got something going now, and a run of injuries could just kill us."

Told that many Hokies in the Richmond area were talking about a 7-3-1 record and a post-season bowl engagement, Coffey laughed and said, "Well, you just tell them Richmond Hokies to keep their mouths shut. We've got a long way to go and a lot of games to play."

Charlie Coffey...‘Long Way to Go’

Staff Photo by Gary Burns