Coffey Hopes VPI Can Stop Errors; Improve Against W&M Saturday

By STAN SHALETT
Daily Press Sports Writer

Virginia Tech’s football team has run its unbeaten string to four games but head coach Charlie Coffey was less than thrilled by the 53-21 romp over an undermanned Ohio University team Saturday.

“We made a lot of mistakes. The kind of mistakes that hurt you in a close ball game. We broke down the errors on the film and showed the players where they did things wrong.

“It’s easier to correct the errors after a win than after a loss. The players are more perceptive and they learn easier after a win.”

Tech will have its hands full again Saturday when the Gobblers meet William and Mary in the Tobacco Bowl in Richmond.

Last year the two ball clubs staged an all out offensive show at Blacksburg with Tech coming out on the long end, 41-30.

Coffey expects more of the same Saturday. “They have a good backfield, an excellent quarterback and a big fast line.”

Similar comments can be made about Tech. Gobbler Quarterback Don Strock is the top passer in the country and also leads in total offense. He is averaging 301.8 yards a game both passing and rushing. His passing figures show 121 completions for nine touchdowns and 1,812 yards in 223 attempts. He is averaging 20.2 completions a game.

Tech is 12th in the country with 417.5 a game in total offense. William and Mary is not far behind with 397.

Because of the potent attack, Coffey is working on correcting the mistakes. The errors that don’t even appear obvious.

“Take for example, our first drive in the Ohio U. game. We had a holding penalty on a long gainer, you can’t do that in a close game. Then when the score was still close, we had the chance to complete a 90 yard scoring play and the receiver dropped the ball. He was wide open, but let the pass get away.

“We threw an interception on the next play, a misread defense and a receiver making an error on his route, these are the things that will hurt you in a close game,” Coffey explained.

“He added a realistic note to his appraisal of his team.

“I realize that you can’t do everything perfectly but a good team can play a game without holding penalties, fumbles and interceptions.”

The Gobblers haven’t had a turnover fumble in the last two games. Strock has been intercepted 13 times, but that is not a lot in relation to the number of passes he has attempted and the fact that the opposition will come into a game with Tech charged up to defend against the passing game.

Injuries, especially on defense have hurt the Gobblers. Tom Shirley who has been a standout at linebacker injured a knee against the Bobcats and is out for the season. Coffey is high on the efforts of the replacements. “Larry Bearekman has played well so has Jim Heizer, but we lose depth.”

Coffey said that his players have been up for the past five weeks but he doesn’t fear a let down Saturday. “Our players are too intelligent for that. Besides the team has a great attitude and is looking forward to playing William and Mary.”

What Coffey left unsaid was that for the first time since 1962, the Gobblers are over .500 with a 3-2-1 record and would like to add William and Mary to the list of wins before returning home to face Southern Mississippi and South Carolina.”