Strocks Gang Up for Victory

Passes, Long Kicks Top Southerners

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BLACKSBURG — There seems to be something about Southern Miss that brings out the worst in Virginia Tech's Don Strock.

Unfortunately for the Southerners, though, they only brought it out of the national passing leader for the first 30 minutes of their game Saturday afternoon before Lane Stadium gathering of 25,000.

In the second half, the brothers Strock ganged up on the visitors to pull the Hokies from a 14-7 deficit to a convincing 27-14 win.

39, 55-Yard Shots

Dave, the kicking Strock, had field goals from 39 and 55 yards, setting a school record with the former, after missing a "gimme" from 18 yards.

Don, the passing Strock, who leads the nation in total offense and passing, had 10 completions in 20 attempts for 232 yards and two touchdowns, after hitting on only four of 15 for 28 yards in the first half and having two stolen, one setting up the Southerners' go-ahead TD.

Of course, there was a pretty good assist by the Hoolie defense — two interceptions and a fumble recovery — and a supreme effort by Ricky Scales on a screen pass that went for the tying TD 43 seconds into the second half.

That was his sixth of the year, tying a Tech record held by Carroll Dale and Terry Strock.

"Scales' touchdown run," said Tech coach Charlie Coffey, "really picked us up. That got us back in the game. And (Andy) Bronyak boomed one out of there (63-yard punt for the Richmond, Va. players, but it sure made me feel better."

39-Yard "Picking"

On the ensuing kick, by Ray Guy, the national punting leader (64.3), there was a "pickup" of 30 yards for Tech, since the Southerners' punt into the wind carried just 30 yards. That was a prelude to Dave Strock's record-breaking 59-yard three-pointer.

"Dave Strock's two field goals," said Coffey, "were the icing. And they had that wind to contend with."

For a long while, there was every reason to believe that there would be no victory cake needing icing, even though Tech was up 7-0, seven minutes into the game.

That followed a fumble recovery at the Southerners' 22 by defensive end Jim Heiser. J. B. Barber got 21 of the yards in three carries. The cover was from three yards out.

Don Strock had not completed his first pass, and the 6-6 senior would not have that first completion until after freshman Barry Gibson had

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Tech’s Jim Barber Breaks Through to the Four; He Scored Hokies’ 1st TD on Next Play

Strokes Gang Up for Win

Continued from 1st Sports Page returned a punt 64 yards (2:16 into the second period) for the first Southern score and Ray Guy — “He’s a thief,” said Coffey. “He was reguenging our tight ends” — had made the first of his two steals to set up the go-ahead TD (11-yard pass from Buddy Palasse to John Sawyer 5:40 into the period).

Loss On First Pass

Don Strock’s first completion incidentally, was for minus two yards to Barber following the second Southern Miss score.

“The wind (10 mph with gusts at 20),” said Strock, “was playing tricks with the ball. And they were dropping the ends to have five linebackers and three deep, trying to make us throw over them.”

But the Gobbler, who made their first win over Southern (in three tries) their fourth of the season against three losses and a tie, found out something from that first-half show of 33 years total offense.

“They were giving us the fault to our strong side,” said Strock. “That’s what got us the touchdown. Scales lined up as a tight end.”

On first and 10 at the Tech 36, the sophomore sprinter dropped back three or four yards, took the pass and then took an indirect route to the touchdown. He started forward, saw the way blocked and cut diagonally from the right sideline to the left, managing to break a tackle and then outrun the pursuers.

Close Call

“He’s going to be tremendous,” Strock and Coffey agreed.

But the Gobbler still weren’t out of the woods. Southern Miss, which was dropping to 3-5 on the year and had a total offense of 272 yards, almost went ahead following the ensuing kickoff. Tech’s defenders stopped the drive at the five and Ricky Palmer missed a field goal try from the 11.

Tech was then stopped at the Southern two and Dave Strock missed from the eight. And he missed from the 36 after Dennis Dodson had recovered a Southern fumble at the Southern 26.

There weren’t many misses by either Strock after that, though. Don the passer hit Craig Valentine from 22 yards for the go-ahead TD 2:16 into the final period.

Then, in order of appearance, Hromyak produced his career record punt to get Tech out of a hole at its 22; Dave the kicker got his and Tech’s career record, field goal (59 yards, old record was Jack Simczyk’s 55) and his 35-yarder.

Almost Another

Thanks to a Jerry Scharms interception with three minutes left, Tech almost got another score, as Don Strock got the Gobbler to the Southern eight before missing twice with 25 seconds left.

That mattered little, though, the brothers Strock — and Tech — had come back from their worst.

“T’m extremely proud of that comeback,” said Coffey. “The way things were going for us, it took guts to stay in there and hold their poise.”

The brothers Strock and most of the 25,000 were rather proud, also. Don the passer could well remember that last year he had his worst outing (16 of 40 with two interceptions no TDs and 173 yards) here against these same people, who won 17-9.

The second half was different this time. Very different.