Tech, Strock Victorious
After Disastrous Start

By Wendell Weisend
VPI Sports Information

You can’t keep a good man down, although for 30 minutes Saturday it looked as though Southern Mississippi had never heard of such a thing.

The Southerners in the first half sacked Don Strock, intercepted two of his aerials, held his first completion to minus yardage and for the first half limited him to four completions in 15 tries—for a paltry 28 yards.

It took Mr. Strock just 43 seconds to get things turned around. On the first play of the second half he hit fullback Rodney Schnurr for 18 yards, and on the next play sophomore wide receiver Ricky Scales gathered in a screen pass and scampered 62 yards for his sixth td of the season, tying a Tech record set first by Carroll Dale as a junior in 1958.

Strock later drilled a 22-yard td pass to Craig Valentine. It was Strock’s 12th td aerial of the season, tying his own record of 1971.

Dave Strock, with an assist from brother Don, indulged in a little record making of his own. Midway in the final period, with Don holding, Dave booted a 59-yard field goal—four yards farther than Jack Simcsak had kicked against Kentucky in 1968.

Less than three minutes later, Dave came back with a 55-yarder, bringing his season total to 11—the same number as Simcsak booted in 1969 (the same year Simcsak set Tech’s kick scoring standard with 58 points; Dave momentarily has 52).

Running back James Barber, gaining comparatively little recognition due to “The Year of the Strocks,” punched in his 10th td of the season (one more than he chalked up as Tech’s leading scorer in 1971) and left himself just 1,000 rushing for his career. The junior from Charlotte, N.C., definitely should rewrite a line or two in the record books before he’s through.

On the negative side Saturday was that for the first time in two seasons the Gobblers’ tight ends, Mike Burnop and Nick Colobro, were blanked in the reception column.

“There was good reason,” Coach Charlie Coffey pointed out. “Southern Mississippi’s first point of concentration was to take that particular seam away from us. They did it sometimes with exceptionally fine pass rush but mostly by aggressive coverage, especially by Ray Guy.”

It didn’t matter. The most important thing was that the Fighting Gobblers, their momentum broken on the previous Saturday and their lethargy carried over into the first half against the Southerners, came from behind to post a win which Coffey declared “very important to me.”

The “House of Thrills” didn’t carry the suspenseful script to the very brink, but the rallying Gobblers were a far cry from the “let it get away” troops of the season’s opener. Or maybe the Techmen were saving the best script for the season’s home finale against South Carolina here next Saturday.

Whatever the Gamecocks do, they’ll likely find that Tech’s good man is indeed hard to keep down.

For the first time in six games Tech didn’t have a major injury.

Senior offensive guard John Schneider, out with a knee injury since the first quarter of the SMU game on Sept. 30, might return to action this week.

The last time South Carolina played in Lane Stadium the Gamecocks won, 17-16, on a 47-yard field goal by Billy Dupre with just nine seconds left in the game. (A South Carolina assistant coach passed out in the bench booth in the pressbox.)