Tech Loves Its Stork

By George Minot Jr.
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BLACKSBURG, Va., Nov. 14—Hereabouts they beg to differ that this is the "season of the squint" in college football, granting that peewees like Bos. 69 Johnny Rodgers of Nebraska, the equally small Greg Pruitt of Oklahoma and even sly Howard Stevens of Louisville are towers, if you will, but not quite.

Perhaps the Littlepipians have inherited much of the gridiron but in Southwestern Virginia they like their players as tall as the Blue Ridge mountains.

Unofficially and temporarily, the stately stork has replaced the glibby gobbler as the athletic symbol of Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Here in "Tech Territory" everyone's darling is quarterback Don (The Stork) Strock, 6'6 -5 (75 if his hair is stood on end).

For those many fans outside this valley who have never heard of him, Stork Strock, a senior, is leading the college world with 188 completions in 348 passing attempts for 2,700 yards. His career total, with two games to go, is 400-747, 5,044 yards, and the pro scouts are understandably in delirium over such a prospect.

"He can play in the pros right now," guessed his coach, Charlie Coffey. "This is my 17th year in coaching (his second as head man at Tech) and I've been around 15 All-Americans. This kid belongs right at the top of the list.

"Strock can throw with accuracy up to 60 yards," Coffey contended. The strong-armed quarterback once threw a ball that measured out to 80 yards when he was a freshman, the year before he was red-shirted in 1969.

"That was with the wind, of course," he said, modestly.

Coffey, who assisted Jim Camp one spring before George Washington gave up football, thinks: "There's not a better college quarterback in the country. He can throw as deep as necessary and he has a real good touch — he throws a great ball to catch."

He would have been a solid Heisman Trophy candidate, added Coffey, if Virginia Tech had a better record than 4-7 last season. The Gobblers-Storks are 5-3 this fall.

In support of his contention that Strock is ready right now to move into the National Football League, Coffey lauded his quarterback as one "who doesn't get upset if he makes a mistake. He has poise and confidence."

"He is superb at reading defenses. He is pro-oriented all the way. There's not a coverage he hasn't seen."

All the while his coach was praising him, Strock was watching movies of Tech's next opponent, mighty Alabama.

Between recs, he ventured he would love to play pro ball and that Joe Namath is his "idol." The on-the-field Namath, that is. Of course, any 21-year-old going on 22, would like to emulate the swinging, off-the-field Namath but Strock insists that trait is "over-rated."

Strock is more a one-girl man. For the last eight months he has kept company with a Tech coed, Pam Sventnick of Arlington, Va. And he admitted a roomful of girls overmatched him last winter.

That occurred when he was in Northern Virginia practice teaching at Madison High in Vienna. "They taught me more than I taught them," he said. Actually, he meant the girls knew more about the subject, fashion merchandising, that he did.

"I don't consider myself a teacher type, though," he said. "I'd like to be a traveling salesman." That after he finishes his pro football career.

One of the pro scouts who has seen him is of the opinion Strock has "slow feet." A classic, dropback passer.

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Stork Strock: 'There's not a coverage he hasn't seen.'