TUSCALOOSA—They call coach Bryant “Bear” because what’s his teams are loaded for, runs one of the older sayings about the coach of the team once known as the Red Elephants and which still uses this symbol. It fits. Elephants stomp things.

Nov. 10, 1967 had Alabama played a homegame in the rain. It made little difference, although with a dry field Bama might have had four more interceptions.

The Tide covered Don Strock’s receivers like white covers rice. Combine this with the hero’s pass rush thrown at Tech so far, throw in the wishbone, rain, cold weather, the Redwood Forest and its resident gorilla, All-America John Hannah (6-3 264), Sports Illustrated cover boy Terry Davis (the Bogalusa Flash), a wetting (Denny Stadium’s playing surface), add a bucket of tarantulas and you begin to get the picture.

To the above add the injury to Bruce McDaniel, injured before he could complete the first quarter of his first game as starter and you have a clue to last Saturday’s Bad Day at Black Rock.

As for the size: Alabama had 44 players weighing over 190, all of them able to hit a few of them fast.

Also the wave of exhilaration they were riding after the romp over LSU with unexpected ease was still rolling.

It’s safe to assume that the Cotton Bowl invitation didn’t hurt anyone. If Tech could have been the number two team nationally even on a dry field with a few key Tide players out with injuries is doubtful, given the crunching nature of the Tide.

Tech’s season closer with Wake Forest last Saturday should be well worth the trip to Winston-Salem, despite the loss to Virginia last Saturday. Wake, showing signs of life late in the season, had 295 yards rushing against the Cavaliers.

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Some thoughts as Tech football nears its finale: Defensive football and public appreciation of the same started to flower this season for VPI. Assuming that all the casualties are back in playing shape next fall, an improved situation could improve even more.

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From the brief glimpse of Bruce Arians in action, it appears that next year’s offense will feature some versatility, with pass-run options, more roll-out and likely some other wrinkles. With as many good pass receivers as are expected to return next year, passing will be a major part of the offense, although not the part it has been during the Strock years, Tech’s greatest ever in passing and total offense. And people named Strock don’t grow on trees.

The post-season bowl lineup should provide some interesting action, with Oklahoma and Penn State in the Sugar Bowl, Notre Dame and Nebraska in the Orange Bowl, Tennessee and LSU in the Astro-Bluebonnet, Georgia Tech and Iowa State in the Liberty, North Carolina and Texas Tech in the Sun, North Carolina State will participate in the Peach, Southern California (number one) in the Rose Bowl, Colorado and Auburn in the Gator and Kent State in the Tangerine against a team yet to be decided (no longer a Southern Conference automatic pick), and Texas vs. Alabama in the Cotton Bowl.

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Travel notes:

Spent two weeks in Tennessee by trying to drive down through it in a day.

For a spicy afternoon, visit the Bear preserve in Tuscaloosa.

If you’ve already seen the Pyramids, don’t overlook Scott Stadium, Richmond City Stadium in mud time, Birmingham at rush hour and beautiful downtown Athens, O.