Strock Claims Two Crowns, Tech Trounces Wake, 44-9

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WINSTON-SALEM — Saturday afternoon's Virginia Tech-Wake Forest football game was a monument to 3,000 hardy spectators and the throwing arm of Don Strock.

Shivering through a near-freezing, game-long drizzle, the sparse Groves Stadium gathering watched Strock, the Tech quarterback complete 25 of 47 passes for 385 yards and a pair of touchdowns as the Hokies wound up their season with a 44-9 victory.

As the Hokies nailed down a 6-4-1 record for their first winning campaign since 1968, Strock also captured the national statistical championships in passing and total offense. The 6-5 senior from Warwick, Pa., finished with 3,170 total yards, the fourth highest single-season total in NCAA history. He also completed 228 passes for 3,243 yards sixth on the all-time list.

In little more than two seasons as a Tech player, Strock accumulated 5,871 yards in total offense and 6,127 yards passing, and it was fitting the way he closed out his career as a Hokie.

Scales Catches Nine
Sharing the offensive limelight with Strock was a young fellow who has two more years of varsity play ahead of him — sophomore wide receiver Ricky Scales.

The 5-10, 180-pounder from Martinsville nabbed nine passes for 213 yards, both school records, and a touchdown.

Still, it was Strock's day, and as the tall star trotted off the field for the last time with six minutes left, a member of the stadium maintenance crew muttered to a colleague, "I ain't never seen no mother throw the ball like that cat."

Trying to get warm in the dressing room after the game, Strock remembered what life as a Tech football player was like little more than two years ago, when he was a seldom used sophomore reserve. "At least a 1,000 times," he said "I thought of quitting. I guess I just couldn't."

When Charlie Coffey replaced Jerry Claiborne as the

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Hokies' coach after the 1979 season, the new Tech boss discovered a strong-armed legacy for his put-in-the-air offense. "I came to Tech not knowing if we even had a quarterback," said Coffey. "and look what I wind up with...a national champion."

For Strock, the nest few weeks will be a time to relax. He turns 22 Monday, and he said he was going home to Pennsylvania. "I haven't even had my Thanksgiving turkey yet," he said. Strock has completed all of his course work at Tech and will graduate in December. In January, he will play in the Blue-Gray All-Star game in Montgomery, Ala., and the Hula Bowl in Honolulu.

There is also the matter of the professional football draft, and there is every reason to believe Strock will be a first- or second-round choice. That means money, a big old pile of it.

Yet the red-shirt senior keeps it all in kind of wry perspective. "It's not always been like this," he said. "For my first three years at Tech, you guys (reporters) wouldn't even talk to me. You'd just walk right past me."

Nobody ignores Strock anymore, certainly not the Wake Forest secondary. Even though the Deacons picked off five interceptions, they mostly suffered grave indignities at the hands of Strock in the final game for Wake coach Tom Harper, who was told three weeks ago he would not be coach for the 1973 season.

Both the Deacons' starting cornerbacks were hurt (back, ankle, injured shoulder), and Strock and Scales picked on them all day. They gave no notice of their intentions early on, following the opening kickoff. Tech went 71 yards (31 on Strock's passes) in eight plays for the game's first touchdown. A nine-yard Strock-to-Scales pass got the six-pointer, and Dave Strock trotted on kick to the Deacons with a 44-9 lead.

Threats, No Points

From that point until half time, Tech dominated Wake's offense. The Deacons made all kinds of motions in each series, but each time, they missed on fourth-and-one situations. On the Tech 9 and 4 yard lines, they fumbled on second down twice.

At halftime, with the Hokies leading, 7-0, Coffey said he told his team, "We got to get a bunch of points on the scoreboard in the third quarter or Wake is going to get better and we're going to find ourselves in a heckuva fight."

Dutifully, the Hokies obeyed. On their first possession of the second half, they moved from their 35 to the Deacons' eight, where on fourth down, the kicking Schmidt booted his field goal. Wake bounced back with a 23-yard field goal by Chuck Ramsey, then Tech began to blow it open.

Following the kickoff, the Hokies went 89 yards in eight plays with a 45-yard pass from Strock to Scales to the Wake three setting up B.J. Barber's touchdown plunge on the next play. Early in the fourth period, Rod Sedwick recovered a fumble on the Deacons' 16. Two plays later, Tech got its third TD on a 12-yard Strock-to-Mike Bumphoss pass.

Wake had a little more fight left as linebacker Denny Brown intercepted a Strock pass and returned it 32 yards for the touchdown which cut the score to 44-20.

Reel on Reverse

Then Tech reeled with a 52-yard drive, capped by Donnie Reel's eight-yard touchdown reverse. The rust was on. "After that," said Harper, "everything fell apart for us."

Though the finish was satisfying, the season record was nowhere near as good as the second year as Tech boss (the Hokies were 47-1 in 1971). "I'm proud of our seniors," he said, "because they finally got their winning season here."

But I look at our record and I feel like we should be 9 and 2, or 8-3, anyway. Just a little bit better job by me and my some other people and we would have made it.

Despite Coffey's momentary attention to what someone called "the awful '63," it is quite apparent that the Hokies are on their way back to football success.

Individual Records

Virginia Tech vs. Wake Forest, Saturday, Oct. 26, 1973

Virginia Tech: 7-3-0, 7-1-0, 6-0-0, 2-0-0, 1-0-0
Wake Forest: 3-3-0, 2-1-0, 5-0-0, 0-0-0

Individual Passers

Virginia Tech: Dave Strock, 19 of 31, 3 touchdowns, 1 interception, 121 yards, 2 rushing yards
Wake Forest: Tom Harper, 8 of 15, 2 touchdowns, 0 interceptions, 103 yards, 7 rushing yards

Individual Rushers

Virginia Tech: Skip Scales, 11 carries, 30 yards, 0 touchdowns
Wake Forest: Thomas Smith, 13 carries, 32 yards, 0 touchdowns

Individual Receivers

Virginia Tech: Mike Bumphoss, 5 catches, 100 yards, 3 touchdowns
Wake Forest: Mike Whittemore, 5 catches, 95 yards, 0 touchdowns

Individual Kickers

Virginia Tech: B.J. Barber, 2 of 2, 23-0, 25-0
Wake Forest: Chuck Ramsey, 2 of 2, 40-0, 27-0

Individual Interceptions

Virginia Tech: Mike Bumphoss, 1 of 1, 0 yards, 0 touchdowns
Wake Forest: Billy Wilson, 0 of 0, 0 yards, 0 touchdowns