Gobblers’ Orange Triumphs, 24-23

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BLACKSBURG — The squad game which wound up Virginia Tech’s spring football practice Saturday went almost exactly according to the script devised by that renowned Tennessee playwright, Charlie Coffey of Shelbyville.

Coffey, the second-year coach of the Hokies, wanted his quarterback, Don Strock, the nation’s second best passer in 1971, to get one team ahead in the first half, then Strock was to switch jerseys and bring his former victims to victory.

That is pretty close to what Strock did. The 6-5 rising senior hit on 16 of 23 passes for 157 yards to lead the Orange team to a 17-10 halftime advantage. Playing for the Whites in the second half, Strock connected on 17 of 29 passes for 179 yards as his team outscored the Orange over that 30-minute period, 13-7.

If you are having a little mental addition after that last paragraph, you know that, in the end, Strock’s White team, was a 24-23 loser, but it was not Strock’s fault.

The big thrower hit on a 58-yard touchdown pass to Rich Heubner with 25 seconds left and the rain missing down. He elected to go for the two-point conversion and threw the pass right on the money. The pass hit sophomore tight end Rick Law in the stomach and dropped harmlessly to the ground in the end zone to spoil the perfect ending to Coffey’s script.

Despite the change in the demouenage Coffey seemed especially pleased with Strock and with a defense that, for several reasons, was inordinately conservative.

The Hokies played the same defense every down: 4-3-4. They never stunted or looped a lineman, and they never blitzed the linebackers. Coffey wanted to see how the lineman in the front four “reacted in a situation where they have to be one man to get to the passer. We played the same zone in the secondary all day, too, to see how our defensive backs would react to the different types of pass routes.”

While the defense played with wraps on for the eyes of several scouts of this fall’s opposition, the Hokies played it wide open on offense. The Tech quarterbacks completed passes almost at will against coverages that seemed to be guarding primarily against long touchdown plays. Four Hokie quarterbacks hit on 21 of 83 passes for 532 yards and only three interceptions.

Strock was by far the most accurate. “He threw the ball 52 times,” said Tech offensive coordinator Wally English, “and he was off target only twice. He had a great afternoon.”

Coffey spread the praise around to other Gobblers.

The stocky coach partic-
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