To Make Strock, Making Tech A Winner Comes First

By BOB MCLLELLAND

Blackburn-

Strock is the rugged young man who has the hazardous job of being a college quarterback. It's a task in which he excels. In fact, he's one of the class quarterbacks of college football.

Last year was his first full season in command and what he accomplished was remarkable. He finished third in the nation in total offense (218.5 per game) and was second in passing (17.7 completions per game).

But Strock held the passing lead most of the season. But a sudden finish by Brian Sipe of San Diego State in what many thought was a "fixed" performance gave him a 17.5 final mark.

And now as Strock prepares himself in spring practice for his senior season, many people would expect the prime thought in his mind would be national individual titles in total offense and passing.

But such people just don't know Don Strock—a rugged 6-5, 206-pounder from Warwick, Pa. He is a cool operator who doesn't get too excited about anything.

He's one of those rare superstars who will very honestly admit his thrills come just as quickly from watching a receiver make a great catch of a pass or from handing off to a halfback and watching him score for a touchdown.

Strock hit on 16 of 25 passes (64 per cent) for 2,605 yards and 12 touchdowns last season. Those and his other records are not on his mind.

The one thing that does have him concerned is the Gobbler's reconstruction job, then there is enough glory for "everyone," be responsible.

Some of the brightest reports coming from the Tech spring practice have concerned the improvement of Strock. The coaches and his fellow players hail him as one of the truly greats.

"He's everything they say he is and then some," says tight end Mike Burnop of Roanoke, "He makes it easy for his receivers. He puts the ball right in there. You feel like a fool if you miss one.

Strock doesn't know about all this praise and compliments of his improvement.

"I realize I have improved," he said, "I can read my keys better. And I'm able to pick out the secondary receiver a lot quicker. But all this just makes me realize that I still have a lot to learn. There is still a long way to go. I doubt if I will ever be satisfied.

Strock is also excelling in the classroom—especially last quarter while doing his student teaching in Fairfax County. He graded a perfect 4.0 from each of his three instructors.

This has been a much more enjoyable spring for Strock. Last year he was fighting Bob German for the position and was still unsure of himself and his ability in the new college Tech system.

This year he has the No. 1 job and he knows it—although there are three anxious reserves pushing for the position. It takes a lot now to shake Strock's confidence. And he has the good trait of not getting too excited or when things start going wrong.

Strock likes to talk about his teammates—both offensive and defensively. He remembers the Tech defense last year wasn't very defensive.

"But things are sure different now," he said. "I know because I play against our defense all week. And this is going to help our offense next season—just wait and see.

Strock feels he has as fine a group of receivers as there is in college football. Burnop and Nick Colacino give him two excellent tight ends. And the wide receivers are plentiful and talented—veterans Donnie Reed, Craig Valentine, redshirt Rick Reibling and sophomores Ricky Scales and Steve Gallesway among others.

He also feels Tech will be much deeper and more talented in the important running back positions with veterans John Dobkins, J. B. Barber, Jon Conlin, Jimmy Polito and others.

Yes, Strock will tell you an improved defense, a more experienced coaching staff as well as better backs and receivers will make the Gobbler a much tougher outfit next fall.

"Of course the coaches or the players and they'll tell you that it will be Mr. Strock—whober he likes it or not—but who will be the big leader in any great success the Gobbler might enjoy next season.

Strock and his mates will be on display Saturday afternoon at 1:00 in Lane Stadium when they show their fans just what they have earned the past 12 months under coach Charlie Coffey and his associates.