Strock-less Tech New Problem for Tribe

By STEVE CLARK

There will be a lot of new faces on the field tomorrow for Virginia Tech. So many, in fact, that Coach Charlie Coffey is advising fans to be sure to buy a program.

But Coffey's biggest worry as the 1978 college football season prepares for the opening kickoff is a bunch of familiar faces — namely, Bill Deery, Doug Gerhart, Terry Regan and Mark Smith. Coffey and faithful Tech fans remember those four guys all too well. Each played a key role in William & Mary's 17-16 upset victory over Tech in the rain and the mud in last year's Tobacco Bowl at Richmond's City Stadium.

All four are back at W&M this season and will be rarin' to go when the Indians visit Tech tomorrow at Lane Stadium at 1:30 p.m.

In another opener, Virginia and Virginia Military Institute meet on the football field for the 68th time. Kickoff will be at 1:30 at Virginia's Scott Stadium.

It would seem that Virginia Tech has a decided incentive advantage on the first day of the new season. After all, losing to W&M last season probably knocked the Gobblers out of a bowl trip. Led by quarterback Don Strock, major college football's leading passer, Tech finished with a 6-4-1 record. Had they finished 7-3-1, the Gobblers most likely would have gone bowling.

But on a wet October Saturday in Richmond, W&M knocked the props out of Tech's act. Gerhart, a 195-pound fullback from New Britain, Pa., ran three yards for one touchdown. Deery, the quick-footed quarterback from Oaklyn, N.J., threw a 32-yard TD pass to tight end Smith. And Regan kicked a 32-yard field goal and two extra points — the second one the margin of victory.

So you've got to figure that Tech has all the incentive this time around.

Not necessarily so, says Jim Root, beginning his second season as head coach in Williamsburg.

"We've got lots of incentive, too. After all, some people thought our win was a fluke because of the muddy playing conditions. We'd like to prove that it wasn't," said Root.

W&M returns the majority of its key players — eight offensive and eight defensive starters are back — and Tech is without Strock at QB this year. Even so, the oddsmakers have made Tech a 10-point favorite, based mainly on Tech's depth and home field advantage.

Root agrees that Tech should be favored, and goes so far as to say Tech could be a better team without Strock.

"Tech is a much more difficult team to run around now," said Root. "Their offense is more diversified without Strock. Last year, all you really had to worry about was their passing attack. This season, they can still throw the ball, but they're going to be much more effective running...."