Barber, Rogers Give Tech Speed

BLACKSBURG—Breakaway runners have been virtually nonexistent at Virginia Tech for a long time, but Phil Rogers and James Barber this year give the Gobblers that added dimension.

Neither is a super blazer, but in the opening-game loss each demonstrated exceptional ability.

Barber, who despite injury has been Tech’s most productive runner for the last two seasons, reeled off one 27-yard run. Last year the Gobblers had just one longer run (34 yards by then backup quarterback Bruce Ariens in the season finale against Wake Forest).

Barber also scored twice against Wm & Mary, giving him 24 career TD’s which ties the Tech record set by Terry Smoot (1967-69).

Rogers, sophomore flash from Gate City, was limited to a maximum run of 17 yards against the Indians, but he made much of his ground on quickness and speed as he averaged almost five yards a carry in 18 tries. And he lofted a 65-yard TD pass to Ricky Scales.

Tech’s last really big run was a 70-yarder by Perry Tiberio against Duke in the 1969 Oyster Bowl. In foot speed, Tiberio wasn’t nearly as swift as either Rogers or Barber.

Barber’s 134 rushing yards against Wm & Mary was the second best of his career. As a sophomore he chalked up 144 in 21 tries against Kentucky—this week’s opponent.

“We have confidence in our offense, and the versatility of Rogers and Barber has a lot to do with our feelings,” Coach Charlie Coffey notes.

Coffey also noted that Tech’s last performance against Kentucky, at least in the first quarter, was similar to last Saturday’s performance against Wm & Mary in that the Gobblers virtually killed themselves by getting way behind and then staging a not quite good enough rally.

In that 1971 encounter with the Wildcats at Lexington, Kentucky intercepted four passes and took a 20-0 first quarter lead and then hung on for a 33-27 victory.