By STEVE CLARK

Anybody else noticed this week that Virginia Tech fans are wearing the same “Why us, Lord?” expression that lifelong Republicans were wearing the week the Watergate hearings opened?

If it’s any consolation to Tech faithful, the 31-24 loss to William & Mary did have its encouraging moments for the Gobblers. For one thing, it looks like Coach Charlie Coffey has found a quarterback to replace Don Strock.

Rick Popp, a redshirt sophomore from Akron, Ohio, probably won’t lead the nation in passing the way Strock did last year. But the young Hokie QB got off to a pretty good start in his first game when he completed 12-of-15 passes for 94 yards.

The fact that Popp started ahead of junior Bruce Arians surprised quite a few people, including W&M Coach Jim Root. “We thought they’d start Arians,” said Root. Arians was Strock’s backup last season.

Of course, it may be a long time before Tech fans forgive Popp for those two fumbles deep in Indian territory which cost the Gobblers two golden chances to score early in the game. But don’t judge Popp too harshly for those expensive bobbles. Both times he was cracked hard by charging W&M defenders. It looked like somebody on the Tech offensive line missed a block in both cases.

Except for the fumbles — Tech lost four in the first half — the Gobblers showed they can still move the ball on offense. They got 223 yards rushing and 215 passing for a total of 438. It’s tough to lose when you have that kind of an offensive day.

Obviously, Coffey and his defensive coaches are going to have to figure out some way to keep the other folk from scoring so much.