
By BILL CATE
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BLACKSBURG—How fast is fast?
It's like zip, zap, zowie. It's like asking how long is a rope (twice as long as half of it) or how high is a mountain? Or when will we get there?
But if you really want to know how fast is fast, ask Ricky Scales. The Virginia Tech wide receiver may not tell you, however, because neither he nor anyone else knows exactly how fast he is.
"He can run as fast as he has to," says Marshall Taylor, who coaches the receivers at Virginia Tech. "Sure, there's a limit, but to tell you the truth we haven't found it yet. There's nobody around here who can beat him."

Scales has been clocked in the 40-yard dash at 4.4, the same as Morris Blueford, a Tech defensive back. But when the two race, well, Scales always wins.

As a matter of fact, Scales has lost but one race in his life. That was in the state school high school track meet when Kent Merritt, who plays at Virginia, beat him by one step in the 100-yard dash.

"That was when I was a sophomore in high school," Scales says. "I don't believe he could beat me now."

That, of course, is a matter of speculation. Something that isn't, however, is that Scales is one of the top pass receivers in the nation. He caught 43 passes last year, averaged 20 yards a catch (same as Paul Warfield of the Miami Dolphins), and didn't play in the first three games.

"He's the best I've seen," says Tech offensive coordinator Dan Henning, who has coached some of the best including Ron Settle-
er's, Barry Smith and Rhett Dawson at Florida State. "He has everything you ask for—great hands, great speed and a great understanding of what the game is all about."

Tech head coach Charlie Colley was on the Arkansas staff when Chuck Dicus, who is now with San Diego, made All-American two years in a row.

"Scales is bigger and faster than Dicus," Colley says. "I haven't seen anyone better."

For Scales, however, this is only the beginning. He will be a junior this season and will undoubtedly rewrite the Tech record book.

"The way our running game looks now," says Henning, "we should be able to get Scales open with the football a lot."

What Henning means is that the Tech runners are much better than they have been in the past, therefore the opposing defense cannot concentrate on the pass.

The way Scales' career is taking shape is somewhat ironic when you consider he played only one year of high school football (at Martinsville) and never really cared if he ever played.

He was more interested in basketball and track and could have gone to college with a scholarship in either.

"Several colleges wanted me for basketball," he says, "and everybody wanted me for track."

However, between Scales' junior and senior year at Martinsville, football coach Dick Hensley persuaded Scales that his future was in football.

"What he said," Scales says, "made a lot of sense. I am too short to make a professional basketball player and there isn't any real professional track. He convinced me I had a future in pro football."

Dick Hensley must know talent because if Scales is not a pro prospect, there isn't one.

Scales' ambition as a receiver is an admirable one. All he wants to do is be perfect.

"I'm still about 30 per cent away," he says. "I can stand some improvement on my pass routes, my downfield blocking and I want to be able to catch every ball I can touch."

When Scales entered Tech, he had little trouble with the outside routes but had trouble catching the ball inside. "I used to wear footsteps," he says. Soon, however, his weakness became his strength.

"He is super catching the ball inside," Colley says. "He just forgets about his personal safety."

And when he does it... watch out. He's fast is fast! Watch Ricky Scales. If you can see him...