COBBLER GROUNDED — Virginia Tech's James Barber picked up seven yards on this play before being dragged down by William and Mary defensive back, Mickey Carey, 45. Assisting on play for W&M was Craig McCurdy, 55. In background are Steve Dalton and unidentified Gobbler. Indians downed Gobbler 31-24 in Blackburg Saturday.

(Coffey Photo)

Coffey says Gobblers need more practice on offense

BLACKSBURG—A bewildered crowd wandered out of Lane Stadium Saturday in an air of disbelief after watching the William and Mary Indians soundly defeat the home-standing Virginia Tech Gobblers, 31-24.

The faithful had come to see the unveiling of the "new" Tech Gobblers. Gooch was passing well, Don Strock, as well as many veteran defensive men. In their place were a host of unproven recruits. The spirit was there, but unfortunately for the Gobblers, there were too many blunders, mistakes.

The Indians, a perennial power in the Southern Conference, outplayed the larger Gobblers from the opening snap.

"They (Tech) tried to hit us early with a couple of big plays," said Jim Root, the second-year coach of the Indians from Williamsburg. "We were able to meet their early threats and force a couple of turnovers which helped us through the first half."

Tech was out for revenge for the first time they put the ball in play. The Gobblers had lost to W&M last year in the muck and mine of Richmond's City Stadium (17-16) and that loss was still fresh in the minds of the returning players when they hit the field.

Tech took the ball after an unsuccessful Indian thrust and marched almost the length of the field before a James Barber fumble on the Indian three-yard line ended the threat.

"The goal line defense is something we have been working on all summer in practices," said Root. "We have been working at splitting the tackles and punching up from underneath to force the fumble."

Along with a punishing defense, the Indians unleashed grinding ball control offense which showed great balance between the pin point passing of junior quarterback Bill Deery and the running of Frank Prochilo and John Garelick.

"We put in a few new wrinkles for them (Tech)," added Root. "But basically it was our standard game plan in full force. Deery played a great game and was bothered most of the way by a bad shoulder."

Charlie Coffey, coach of the Gobblers, had nothing but praise for the Indians.

"We definitely did not lose this game, William and Mary beat us."

Talking about his team's performance, Coffey seemed to be happy with some of the results but was disappointed in the ball-handling ability of his backs.

"We run a high-risk offense with a great deal of ball handling in the backfield. It appears our boys need more practice running this type of offense," said Coffey. "I am sure we will get better as the season progresses."

One of Tech's major problems going into this season was the replacing quarterback Don Strock as the general of the Tech offense.

The Orange thought they had the answer in two young signal callers. Bruce Ariens, a red-shirted junior, spent part of last season as Strock's understudy.

The second youngster, who was handed the starting assignment for the opener, was sophomore Rick Popp.

Popp showed, on occasion, the ability to lead the Tech offense with the mastery of a veteran. However, sometimes his lack of experience became apparent under the strain of the game.

"Both quarterbacks looked about the same to me from the sideline," added Coffey. "I can't make any final evaluations until I look at the films."

TECH GOBBLINGS: Officials at Tech announced that there is still a limited number of tickets available for the Tech-UVA game to be played at Blacksburg on Oct. 20. The W&M game was originally scheduled as the season finale for both teams to be played Nov. 21. Even without the student body, which does not return for classes until next week, the Saturday's attendance was over 16,500.

Tech won the battle of yardage, 432-296 but lost four fumbles and had several penalties in crucial situations.