VPI Comeback Fails

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LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — Quarterback Sonny Lewis engineered one of the most explosive attacks in recent Kentucky history in the first half Saturday, but the Wildcats' offense died after halftime and they barely held on for a 31-26 football victory over Virginia Tech.

Lewis scored two of the Kentucky touchdowns, completed five of eight passes for 84 yards and carried the ball 10 times for 90 yards as Kentucky scored all its points in the first two periods.

After intermission, Kentucky posted only three first downs and fumbled the ball away twice in the third quarter.

Virginia Tech, with sophomore quarterback Rick Popp at the helm, scored 20 of its points in the second half and Popp accounted for two touchdowns on passes to Kevin Dick and Billy Hardee.

Only the Kucky defense led by 251-pound Jim “Bubba” McCollum, checked Tech from turning the game into a rout.

Kentucky's offensive unit gave the Gobblers the ball on the one-yard line midway in the third period but the Wildcat defense held and a 25-yard field goal attempt failed.

Minutes later Kentucky's Sonny Collins fumbled at the Wildcat 28. Again the defense held and Tech came up short.

Another series of downs, Tech blocked a Kentucky punt, took over on the 25 and this time the Wildcat defensive unit was too tired to stop the charge.

Tech went to the air in the fourth period with Popp handling the throwing until late in the game when he was injured on an option play.

Tech's starting quarterback, Bruce Arians, returned for three plays but missed his receivers all three times.

Kentucky racked up 294 total yards offense in the first half, but was able to muster only 60 yards after halftime while Tech was rolling for 220, more than half of it on passes.

Neither team could manage an interception, but both had fumble trouble, with Kentucky losing the ball three times and Tech twice.

The Wildcats could do no wrong in the first half, when the scored on all but two times they had the football. Those two efforts ended in a punt and a fumble.

A Tech fumble on its 26-yard line led to Kentucky's first touchdown and another Gibbler bobble at the 18 gave the Wildcats their second score.

Kentucky mustered two long drives—one in each of the first two periods, for touchdowns and another score came when Lewis scampered 63 yards on an option play.

Tech put two touchdowns on the board with drives of 75 and 80 yards, both in the fourth period, with passes from Popp as the clincher.

In the 75-yard drive, the sophomore from Akron, Ohio accounted for all but one yard. He also had an eight-yard pass as part of the 80-yard drive.