LEXINGTON, KY. (UPI) — Little Ernie Lewis scooted 63 yards for one touchdown, one yard for another and passed 14 yards for a third score Saturday as the Kentucky Wildcats christened their new 53,000-seat Commonwealth Stadium with a 31-26 victory over Virginia Tech.

The Wildcats, opening the football season under new coach Fran Curci, had to withstand a 20-point rally by the Gobblers in the last half after soaring to a 31-6 lead at the intermission.

Placekicker Cary Latimer missed three field goal tries in the last half that could have given Tech the victory. The attempts were 50, 25, and 45 yards in length.

Lewis, a 168-pound junior, executed the quarterback option with finesse in the first half as Kentucky cashed in recovered VPI fumbles for its first two touchdowns.

Elevated to starting quarterback after Dinky McKay was declared ineligible this season, Lewis lost no time in rewarding Curci's faith in him.

He hit flanker Ray Barga with a 4-yard scoring pass early in the first quarter and maneuvered the Wildcats into position for an eight-yard touchdown run by Sonny Collins three minutes later. A 30-yard field goal by Ron Steele completed the Kentucky scoring in the first quarter.

In the second period, Lewis caught the Tech defense by surprise and dashed 63 yards for a touchdown to thrill the estimated crowd of 48,000.

On the Wildcats' next possession, Lewis steered Kentucky 74 yards to a touchdown, completing all three of his passes in the march including a 20-yarder to Jk Alvarez on the VPI one-yard-line. Lewis sneaked the final yard in the drive.

Looking like a different team in the second half, Tech stormed back on two touchdown passes by sophomore Rick Popp and a six-yard touchdown run by fullback James Barber.

Popp connected with tight end Kevin Dick on a nine-yard scoring aerial to make the score 31-12 at the end of three quarters. He threw a 30-yard TD pass to Billy Hardee in the fourth quarter.

The only scoring by Tech in the first half came on a one-yard run by starting quarterback Bruce Arians in the second quarter, climaxing a 56-yard drive.

**VPI**

- 0 6 6 14-26
- Ken-Barga 14 pass from Lewis (Steele kick)
- Ken-Collins 8 run (Steele kick)
- Ken-FG Steel 30
- VPI-Arians 1 run (pass failed)
- Ken-Lewis 63 run (Steele kick)
- Ken-Lewis 1 run (Steele kick)
- VPI Dick 9 pass from Popp (pass failed)
- VPI Hardee 30 pass from Popp (Latimer kick)
- VPI Barber 6 run (Latimer kick)

*Estimated*