'Lightning' Hits Virginia Tech Again

By BILL CATE
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MORGANTOWN, W. Va. — Under a hazy September sky, a good football team emerged here Saturday afternoon.

That team belonged to West Virginia.

For the first time in three games, Virginia Tech lost to a superior football team. The score was 24-16, West Virginia. It wasn't that close.

The Mountaineers, now 2-0 for the season, had speedsters Danny "Lightning" Buggs and Marshall Miller open all afternoon. In most cases, the passers were there, then dropped. For the record, Buggs scored on one home run, a 59-yard pass play from quarterback Abe Dillon. But he dropped at least three certain touchdowns and had one touchdown called back because he stepped out of bounds before catching the ball.

Tech had its fastest defensive player, Merrie Blueford, trying to stay with Buggs (Tech actually played zone pass defense but Buggs lived in Blueford's zone), but it was like you trying to catch Richard Petty. Buggs, a 4.4 sprinter, was never really contained.

The Hokies probably played their best game, especially in some areas, but West Virginia, on this day, was the better team.

Tech's defensive performance ready in the opening minutes. Actually, the Hokies had a great opportunity to get on the scoreboard early but Wayne Latimer missed a chip-shot field goal after the snap was bobbled.

"You don't realize unless you've played football," said Tech coach Charlie Coffey later, "how much it takes out of you when you should have scored and didn't."

The Hokies, however, got on the board first when Latimer kicked a 25-yarder in the opening seconds of the second quarter.

That deed seemed to irritate the Mountaineers, who promptly made the score 7-3 when Darwayne Wood ran for 38 yards. A key play in the drive was a pass interference call charged to Tech. Frankey Jester kicked the point.

Apparently, West Virginia wasn't satisfied with such a small lead, so Charlie Miller, a Mountaineer cornerback, intercepted a Rick Popp pass and ran it back to the Tech 37. Dillon hit tight end Dave Jaggman for a 14-yard completion, then watched Buggs drop one in the end zone. West Virginia settled for Nester's 36-yard field goal.

Tech got nothing but trouble the next series. The Hokies gave up the ball on Bruce Daniels' 19-yard kick. West Virginia had it on its 22, then took 12 plays to get it in the end zone. The scoring play came on the option, which kept Tech befuddled the entire first half. Owens carried it in from the five on a pitch from Dillon. Nester made it 17-3.

The Hokies appeared ready to move. Billy Hardee made his second super kickoff return and Tech had the ball on the Mountaineer 49. Then Phil Rogers fumbled and West Virginia had it with more than a minute to go in the half.

Disaster struck again. This time Dillon to Buggs on a 59-yard touchdown pass. Nester made it 24-3.

The second half had but one touchdown, that a 10-yard pass from Popp to Hardee. But that came after Buggs' 64-yard touchdown was nullified when he stepped out of bounds before catching the pass. Tech was helped immensely by a pass interference call which gave the Hokies the ball on the Mountaineers' 10.

Tech's defense made a magnificent goal-line stand early in the fourth quarter, stopping West Virginia at the one. The Hokies took over and drove the length of the field. They had four shots at a touchdown from the one. Three times they tried it inside. Nothing.

Then they went wide. A six-yard loss. That series sent offensive coordinator Dan Henning out.

Virginia Tech

Times Photos by John Cook

Coach Charlie Coffey (left), the Virginia Tech Cheerleaders and Player Keith Gibson Were in a Subdued Mood as the Clock Ticked Off Another Loss
Mountaineers Whip Techmen

From Page C-1

ning into the doldrums.

"I don't understand it," he said. "We do the hard things, but we can't do the easy things."

It was a great drive for Tech—although it was aided by three penalties—but it went for nothing.

"I'll never run the ball four straight times," said Henning. "I wish we had thrown it now."

The statistics will tell you that West Virginia outclassed Tech. The Mountaineers got 429 total yards while Tech was reduced to 222. Woods did the most damage, gaining 145 yards in 14 carries, mostly on the pitchout from Dillon.

"We keep seeing something new every week," said Coffey. "There was nothing difficult about stopping the option (Tech stopped it in the second half), but it took us too long to do it."

Tech's pass rush was almost non-existent. The Hokies tried
to contain and there was never a blitz.

Although West Virginia was impressive, the Mountaineer coach Bobby Bowden wasn't particularly happy.

"We won't beat Illinois the way we played our first two games," Bowden said. Where does that leave Tech?

Individual Statistics

RUSHING

RECEIVING

PASSING
West Virginia: Dillon 11-25-3 for 162. Tech: Popp 13-21-1 for 75 yards.