SMU wishbone more than just a dressing

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The last time Virginia Tech ran into a wishbone offense the results were disastrous.

Monstrous might be a better word. Alabama used the wishbone to destroy Tech 52-13 last year in the next-to-last game.

Now the Gobblers are 0-3 and haven't faced a wishbone this season. The fact that SMU uses the wishbone doesn't exactly mean the losing ways are over. It's more than a matter of getting up for the wishbone. It's a matter of designing the defense to stop it.

"The only way," said Tech senior linebacker Kent Henry, "is to just whip people and get to the ball. That's how you beat it."

But Henry admits it will be a tough task to carry out this Saturday when the Gobblers meet SMU in Dallas. So far the Mustangs have crucified Santa Clara 49-7 and murdered an Oregon State team 35-16 the week after Auburn had barely beaten the Beavers 18-9.

SMU also has running backs Alvin Maxson and Wayne Morris who gave Tech a fit in Blacksburg last year. This year both are averaging better than seven yards per carry.

But Henry has an idea for stopping the wishbone. "It's a dangerous offense," he warned. "The ball can be fumbled because there are a lot of handoffs, fakes and pitchouts.

"But the advantage is that they have both of those good backs in the game at one time and they can run more than from the I formation."

Henry also feels that SMU may be the best team Virginia Tech has faced. This doesn't help the thinking as far as ending the Gobblers' losing streak is concerned.

"Over-all, I would say their personnel is a little tougher than any team we've faced," Henry asserted.

The question is what will Tech's defense do this week. So far the Hokies have had problems stopping teams.

"It's been the same for three weeks," Henry said. "We play good for a period and then have a breakdown. We give up the big play. But no one is driving the ball on us. The wishbone is a ball control offense. So this should help our defense."

Henry says that one thing wrong with the Tech defense may be that no one has taken charge yet. He could be the candidate for this job because he has graded well in the first three games. Last week, in the 24-10 loss to West Virginia, Henry caused a fumble and recovered it, and also intercepted a pass.

"Someone has to take over," said Henry. "I'll do everything I can to do it if possible. Somehow we've got to play good ball for 60 minutes instead of just a half or three quarters of a game."

Kent Henry . . . Tech linebacker