WINLESS TECH FALLS, 27-24

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BLACKSBURG, Va. — South Carolina’s Gamecocks, getting Paul Dietzel’s 100th win as head coach despite him being bedridden with illness back in Columbia, outscored snake-bitten Virginia Tech 27-24 in an offensive battle of Southern independents here Saturday.

A crowd of 38,000 viewed the offensive rich, defensive poor contest in Lane Stadium, where Tech lost its first homecoming contest in four years. The Gobblers, thoroughly flogged by Carolina sophomore quarterback Jeff Grantz, are now 0-5 and headed against nationally-ranked power Houston in their next contest on enemy artificial turf in the Astrodome.

South Carolina, snapping out of a two-game losing streak and averting last year’s loss to the Hokies, is now 2-2.

GRANTZ, a slick ball handler running the veer attack with poise, completed 14 of 24 passes for 248 yards, scored two touchdowns himself, and guided the Gamecocks to three more scores and 478 yards in total offense. He picked apart the Tech defense a second, threw no interceptions and also netted 51 yards on the ground on keeper plays.

Grantz, who packs only 178 pounds on a 5-11 frame, scored twice on 1-yard runs. SC’s top receiver was 5-10, 167-pound junior Mike Ferrell, who hatched on to six passes for 128 yards including a six-pointer which came on the halfback pass from Jay Lynn Hodgin. The Gamecocks got a total of 236 yards on the ground with Hodgin leading the balanced offense with 98 yards on 23 attempts.

RICK POPP connected on 10 of 22 passes for 219 yards and two touchdowns while James Barber rushed for 164 yards in 18 carries. Sophomore Popp, however, was intercepted three times and Tech inserted promising freshman quarterback Eddie Joyce in the late stages of the game. Joyce was trapped for losses of six and eight yards as the pass protection broke down on his only two passing attempts.

BILLY HARDEE and freshman George Heath of Bristol were standouts for Tech on kickoff returns. Hardee getting a crisp block from Heath to spring him, returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown while Heath had returns of 14, 72, 26, 19 and 22 yards in his varsity debut. Hardee also was a super receiver with four catches for 115 yards and a TD.

Tech, scoring its first TD in an opening quarter this season, scored on the second play of the game when Popp popped a fly pattern to Hardee who thundered 74 yards for six points. Wayne Latimer’s PAT had Tech up by 7-0 in the first 50 seconds of the game and the scoreboard Gobbler was screaming its delight.

But South Carolina went to great lengths (exactly 62 yards) to tie it up. The Gamecocks, staying on the ground and putting the Tech defensive front there, rammed over from one-yard away on a quarterback sneak by Grantz and Bobby Marino’s PAT knotted the score at 7-7.

HEATH’S electrifying 72-yard kickoff return ensued, but Tech bogged down with the help of 25 yards in three penalties at the SC 30 and ended up punting back at the 41.

Grantz, proving early SC could run on Tech, then proved they could throw. After hitting a 20-yard pass to Eddie Muldrow, Grantz guided the visitors to the Tech 25 where Marino booted a 42-yard field goal on fourth and six.

Down by 10-7 at the first stop, Tech sailed goalward early in the second after Popp connected on a 46-yard pass to Rick Scales, but a bad pitch out on third down cost Tech nine yards and probably six points and Latimer settled for a 35-yard field goal and a 10-10 tie.

Grantz growled back with a 79-yard Carolina TD advance and the payoff pitch was a 39-yard halfback pass from Hodgin to wide-open Ferrell.

Down by seven, Tech again tied the count. Barber got 15 on a draw play. Scales 15 on the first of two successive end around plays and Popp fired a beautiful 36-yard scoring pass to Scales. Latimer’s toe said 17-17.

But Carolina again came throwing — and running. Grantz mixed up his plays and the Gobblers on an 80-yard march, in which he completed four passes for 17, 13, 10 and 12 yards. The stylish little QB scored on fourth and one and Marino’s boot pronounced the Carolina halftime lead 24-17.

Quick field goal — a 36-yarder by Marino — to open the second half and a 10-point lead, 27-17. Hardee’s answer was a 96-yard kickoff return and Latimer’s toe had brought Tech back within three at 27-24 with 11:11 left in the third quarter.

But that was to be all the scoring. South Carolina lost its first down fumble to Tech f resh defensive end Bill Houseright on first and goal at the Tech 2 and later lost the ball on downs when a pass fell incomplete at the Gobbler two.

But Tech, which had three passes intercepted in the fourth quarter and was twice pinned to the wall by South Carolina punts to the Tech 3 and 2, couldn’t pull it out of the fire.

The last chance came on fourth and 14 at the Tech 38 with 32 seconds to play. A Popp pass fell incomplete and South Carolina, was a three-point victor.

“We made some progress in our offensive consistency,” said a dejected Tech head coach Charlie Coffey. “But our defense played poorly on the formation side. We haven’t improved defensively since the season started.”