Barber: ‘Musical Running’

J. B. Barber enjoys music. “I like all kinds,” he said not long ago. “I have this stereo...”

Saturday, at Lane Stadium in Blacksburg, Barber had something of a stereo effect on South Carolina. The Gamecocks around him coming and going off tackle, up the middle, around end. And when the day was done, J. B. Barber had rushed for a career-high 164 yards against the Gamecocks.

That fact may have been lost on the ‘winning is everything’ people. But for the realists who watched Barber’s performance, there had to be an explanation for the senior tailback-turned-fullback, even though the game ended on a sour note, specifically a 27-24 loss by the Hokies.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen Barber run with more effort or determination,” observed a long-time press box visitor at Tech. “It was just beautiful.”

Considering the fact that Barber led the Techmen in rushing in both his sophomore and junior seasons, and ranks a not-far-away second to young Phil Rogers, this year’s leader, the observation was meaningful.

Eighteen times the senior from Charlotte carried the ball for the Gobblers against the Gamecocks. And only twice were his efforts fruitless. Eleven rushes in the first half accounted for 80 net yards and five first downs. Seven carries after intermission were even more productive (64 yards, three first downs).

Tech’s all-time scoring leader (150 points), Barber ripped off long gains of 23, 19 and 38 yards in the Hokies’ fifth loss of the season. And the biggest was saved for last when Tech struggled to overcome.

A goal line stand by Tech had thwarted S. C. at the Gamecocks’ one yard. Barber’s rush around left end and carried the ball to the Tech 38 before Carolina defenders could, with considerable effort, bring him to the ground.

It all proved futile, of course. But it was no less a remarkable performance and earned for Barber the Times-Dispatch offensive player of the week award.