HOKIES FACE HOT HOUSTON

HOUSTON—Virginia Tech's maligned football team probably feels like the man who only looked one way while crossing a two-way street.

After five consecutive losses, Tech now faces a foe which is apparently better than the five which have defeated the Hokies. Not only is Houston nationally ranked (14th), the Cougars have defeated four teams which were undefeated at the time.

There are some other pluses for Houston. For one, the Cougars have lost only five games in the Astrodome, the site of Friday night's game, in a nine-year period.

About the only thing going for the Hokies is Houston has never won its first five games. That situation is likely to change Friday night.

Tech Coach Charlie Coffey says he isn't as upset with the Hokies' five losses as he is with the defense.

"Our offense still lacks some consistency, but at least it has shown improvement," Coffey says. "The offensive line has done a fairly consistent job. Sophomore quarterback Rick Popp has shown his command of the offense, both mentally and mechanically, is much better.

"We've gotten some outstanding individual efforts from individuals like running backs James Barber and Phil Rogers (who is out of the Houston game with a shoulder separation) and Billy Hardee.

"We've had some outstanding individual efforts, and at times the defense has played well as a unit. But it has too often given up the big play, and repeatedly it has appeared not ready to give its best at the start of the game."

Oh, yes. One more thing about Houston. It ranks fourth in the nation in total offense.