Tech Travels To Astrodome For Battle Tonight

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Virginia Tech faces undefeated Houston in the Astrodome tonight in an unusual Friday night football game beginning at 7:30.

It's not unusual for Houston, which plays most of its home games on Friday night.

Houston, nationally ranked, has a tough offensive game, and why shouldn't they? Coach Bill Yoeman invented the Veer offense at Houston and his teams have been near the top in offensive statistics for the past six years.

This season is no different. The Cougars have all four starting backs, including quarterback D. C. Nobles, averaging over 4.7 yards per carry. Running back Gabe Cherry is averaging 5.9 yards per carry.

Coach Charlie Coffey said Thursday that it is "quite a challenge any time you can play a nationally ranked team like Houston in the Astrodome, where they (Houston) play their best." Coffey added, "It's quite a challenge and quite a privilege."

Tech is 0-5, but Coffey hopes to improve well enough to win a few games this season.

"It would be a great time for our defense, which has been publicly criticized, to relieve all the tensions at this stage. It will take a tremendous effort to stop Houston," the Gobbler coaches pointed out.

Although Houston is known best for its running game, Nobles is a fine passer. "He's a fine passer and a great athlete," Coffey noted. Nobles has connected on 27 of 56 passes this season with only three interceptions, for 496 yards and 2 TD's for a 48.2 completion percentage.

Coffey said Thursday he didn't know how playing on Friday night would effect the Gobbler's efforts. "There's really no way to predict how it will affect us if it does at all," he noted.

"Because I've never played on a Friday night and my players haven't, so I just don't know.

Besides, Cherry, Marshall Johnson and Leonard Parker will be running right at Tech.

Houston suffered its first key injury of the season in the fading minutes at San Diego when offensive tackle Ken Baugh, a senior letterman from Kaufman, Texas, left the game with a knee injury and will be out indefinitely.

Coffey kind of had to chuckle when he found out who would be replacing the injured Baugh. The replacement is a freshman, named David Brooks. Coffey asked "how big is he. I looked on the sheet and answered, "he's 6-4 and 280 pounds." Coffey had to chuckle. What are you gonna do?

Tech's Rick Popp or Eddie Joyce will have to watch UH corner Robert Giblin who came up with another interception against San Diego. Also middle linebacker Deryl McGallion.

Coach Coffey feels that the key will be how many times Tech gets the opportunity to score and to score when they do get the opportunity. "Even though Houston has such a high calibre offense, they commit a lot of turnovers," Coffey pointed out. "So the key to winning, or staying in the game with Houston, is that when we have the football, we have to get something out of it, rather than being forced to punt where we will jeopardize field position."

The Hokies front four, defensively is extremely young and will get tested severely. Freshmen tackle Tommy Beasley and end Bill Houseright, will likely start the game.