Third quarter kills Hokies

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston scored two touchdowns in 1:41 of the third quarter—including a 95-yard kickoff return by Larry Jefferson—to overcome seven first half fumbles and defeat aroused Virginia Tech 54-27 Friday night.

The Gobblers, winless in six games, took advantage of Houston’s miscues for a 17-14 half time lead on touchdown passes of 29 and 40 yards from quarterback Rick Popp to Ricky Scales and a 51-yard field goal by Wayne Latimer.

Jefferson took the opening kickoff of the second half, ran straight up midfield then down the left sideline for the second longest kickoff return in Houston history.

Houston safety Howard Ebow, stung on both of Scales’ touchdown receptions, intercepted a Popp pass on Tech’s next series and returned it 25 yards to the Gobblers’ five. Quarterback D. C Nobles scored on the first play from scrimmage—all with 1:41 elapsed in the third quarter.

The 14th-ranked Cougars, fourth nationally in total offense, got their first half points on a 53-yard punt return by Joe Rust and an eight-yard run by Reggie Cherry. Cherry also scored on a two-yard run in the third quarter.

In addition to his first half touchdowns, Scales fooled the Cougars’ with a 16-yard end around touchdown late in the third quarter. Latimer kicked his second field goal, a 32-yarder, in the third period.

Houston rolled up 26 points in a third quarter which also included a 43-yard pass-run touchdown from Nobles to Frank Scalise.

The Cougars, now 5-0, picked off five Tech passes including three by defensive back Bill Jones in the second half.

Virginia Tech defensive back Lynn McCoy led the Gobblers’ inspired first half performance with two fumble recoveries and one pass interception. McCoy recovered a fumble by Cherry to set up Scales’ 40-yard touchdown reception after defensive back John Dell had intercepted a pass and defensive end Doug Tacker recovered a fumble to set up two other Tech scores.

The Cougars, who also rank fourth nationally in rushing offense, had more than one runner surpassing 100 for the second straight week. Nobles rushed 100 yards on 13 carries and Leonard Parker rushed 119 yards on 19 carries.