Hokies shine for a half

Tech loss not so bitter

By BOB McLELLAND
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HOUSTON, Tex. — It was the old story only time
there was a little more hope a day or two of
sunshine at the end.

Virginia Tech took its sixth straight straight loss here last night—a 54-27
beating from a solid and unbeaten Houston team before the
Astrodome. And if you can find something to smile about af
ter a 27-point losing, then Tech found it.

Actually the Gobblers had everyone buzzing with exci
tment the way they went after the unbeaten Cougars. And at
halftime, with the Techmen holding a surprising 17-14
lead, some of the more opti
mistic Hokies were wondering
if an upset was possible.
But Houston erased all of that with a 26-point explosion
in the third period that was
ignited by a 95-yard kickoff return to open the period.

"That's the story of our
life," said Tech Coach Charlie
Collins. "But we got something started and they won't
let it get away. But there were plenty good things out
there tonight and this loss
was not nearly as tough to
take as our first five de
feats."

It was just another case of
the Tech offense putting the
points on the board but mak
ing the costly mistakes. And
the defense—well it started fast and finished slow.
The defense piddled up two fumbles, intercepted a pass to
set up the first two touchdowns and the TD.

It even made a great goal line stand.
But that was all in the first
period)—after that, the
Houston veer took over.

The Tech offensive men
didn't think much of the Hous
ton defense but the Tech de
fense came away impressed with the Houston defense. And
that was pretty good sum
mary of the game.

There were stars for Tech—
Ricky Scales, who got all
three Hokie touchdowns;
freshman running back Dan
ny Ludd, who has been on the
varisty only two weeks; quar
terback Ricky Papp (who
keeps gaining confidence and
the take-charge attitude he
needs); freshman tackle Tom
Beasley, who led the defense
with 11 tackles and assists;
and linebarker Tom Shirley
who played with an injured
shoulder but had some big
plays.

"It's exciting," said Ludd,
who ran for 37 yards and
grabbed seven passes for 84
yards. "The only thing wrong
was that we lost. I know it's
something to play your first
varsity game as a freshman
in the Astrodome. That's
something you just dream
about.

Papp, despite his two touch
down passes and 221 yards
in the air, was faulting himself
for his three interceptions. "I

knew I did some good things," he said. "But I fell

apart in the third quarter."

Scales and Papp agreed that Houston wasn't so tough
defensively—especially against the pass. "I could
have beaten them deep all night," said Scales. It wasn't
the first time the talented junior from Martinsville has
scored three touchdowns in a varsity game—he did it last
year in a win at Ohio Uni
versity.

There was much less head
boiling and defeatist attitude
in the Tech dressing room.
The Gobblers seem to have
more hope for the future—
especially the offense. "When
you put 27 points on the
board, you ought to win,"
said one Techman.

Tech really put a scare into
the Cougars—who set a school
record by winning their fifth
straight to open a season.
And for a while, it looked as
though the defense came to
play.

Two fumble recoveries
(Doug Thacker and Lynn
McCoy) and a pass interception
by John Bell set up the first
two touchdowns and field
goal—a 51-yard beauty by
Wayne Latimer. The TDs
came on Popp to Scales
passes of 29 and 40 yards and
a 16-yard run by Scales.

But the 17-14 halftime lead
didn't last long as the angry

Cougars erupted for two
fourth-quarter touchdowns
and 1:41 as the third period
opened. Larry Jefferson start
ned it with a 95-yard kickoff
return.

After that it was just a
matter of what the final mar
gin would be as the Cougars
plopped their way for 364
yards on the ground and 107
in the air for a total defense of
471 yards.

But Tech did make some
offensive displays and gave
the fans some excitement.

D. C. Nobles was just too
much for the Gobblers. The
lean quarterback ran for 100
yards, passed for 94 and gave
the Techmen fits with his op
eration of the Houston veer.

Fullback Leonard Parker was the
routed with 118 yards
rushing.

Houston Coach Bill Yeoman
tipped his hat to Tech for the
way it got the opening jump.
He said it was something he
had feared but gave credit to
his team for coming back.

Nobles said he felt coming
into the Astrodome that he
and the rest of the team
weren't ready. It was just a
case of an unbeaten team
playing at home against a team
that had lost five straight.

Eddie Joyce Jr. of Salem
played the final offensive ser
ries for Tech and handled
himself well. He completed
two passes for 40 yards but
had a third intercepted to kill
a possible scoring drive.

"Well, none of them hit the
ground," he smiled.

Coffey had only a brief talk
with his squad before opening
the dressing room doors, and
the talk was more of a fatherly
nature. He told the Gob
blers to keep their heads up,
spelled out the good things
they did and told them to get
ready for Virginia next Satur
day in Blacksburg.

He then went around to
many of the players, patted
them on the back and offered
words of encouragement. It
was a far more impressive
sight than has been the case
in past Tech losses.

"Don't give up on us," he
said. "We keep getting better
and doing more things right.
If we just didn't have those
dam breakdowns and mis
takes. But Houston is a great
team—beat by beat, we
have played this season."