Gobblers Fall, 49-16

Memphis St. Zaps Tech

MEMPHIS, Tenn.—Peach Bowl scouts liked what they saw Saturday night in the Liberty Bowl when the team they came to see—Memphis State—routed hapless Virginia Tech 49-16.

The Tigers, now 6-2 on the season under Coach Fred Pancoast rolled up an easy 28-10 first half advantage and used their passing game to roll up over 500 yards total offense against the Gobblers which dropped to 1-8 on the season.

Tech, under Coach Charley Coffey, put up a poor showing to the Tigers, which weren’t considered that many points better than the Hokies. The Gobblers close out their season at home beginning next week when they host 0-9 Florida State and 2-7 VMI.

Virginia Tech has been outscored 338 to 166 in nine ball games.

Memphis State rolled up 24 first downs to Tech’s 10, and had 175 yards passing with quarterback Mike Robb hitting on 9 of 16 for 121 yards. The man he replaced after an injury, Joe Bruner, entered the game in the fourth quarter and tossed two touchdown passes, to equal Robb in that category for the night.

The Tigers had 330 yards on the ground led by Darnell Harris with 106 yards and Dan Darby with 76 yards.

For Tech, freshman quarterback Eddie Joyce hit on 10 of 18 passes for most of Tech’s 131 yards passing. Tech failed to establish a running game, garnering only 120 yards on the ground for 251 yards total offense. Sophomore Phil Rogers of Gate City had 53 yards as did senior back James Barber.

After a scoreless third period, Tech found itself still trailing 28-10.

But Memphis State’s Zacky Butler, a freshman, rushed 18 yards from the Tech 36 for a first down and Darby broke tackles down to the six before Clifton Taylor bullied his way into the end zone for the first score of the second half, his eighth TD of the season. Tech trailed 35-10.

George Heath set up the next Tech score with a 78-yard kickoff return on the ensuing kickoff down to the State 12. Rogers and Barber moved the ball to the one from where Joyce scored with 12:04 left in the game.

Tech kicker Wayne Lattimer missed his first extra point kick of the season and Tech trailed 35-16.

Bruner scored one touchdown and passed for another to end up the Memphis State scoring.

Virginia Tech’s defense couldn’t stop Memphis State as two stalwarts, linebacker Tom Shirley and end Doug Thacker didn’t make the trip due to injuries.

Memphis State took a 28-10 lead in the first half off brilliant passing from quarterback Mike Robb and some excellent receiving by flanker Bob Ward.

The Tigers had 133 yards passing in the first two quarters.

Memphis State scored first after a tech drive stalled and ended with a missed 42-yard field goal attempt by Tech’s Wayne Lattimer. Tech had an opportunity when freshman quarterback Eddie Joyce of Salem, Va., hit wide receiver Ricky Scales at the MSU 43 and Scales had to stop and wait on the ball.

But that drive was stymied with the missed field goal, and the Tigers, with junior quarterback Robb filling in for injured starter Joe Bruner, who’s been out for three weeks, engineered the drive. It took the Tigers 13 plays to go 80 yards. Robb hit Ward with a long pass to the Tech 20, with running back Clifton Taylor and Dornell Harris moving to the one. Robb kept and scored with 7:00 to go in the first period. Hal McGeorge, who hasn’t missed a point after attempt all year, kicked the conversion for a 7-0 lead.

Tech came charging back with Joyce passing to Kevin Dick for a first down at the MSU 31. Running back James Barber carried the bulk of time to move the ball to the 10. But the Gobblers couldn’t sustain the drive and ended up with a 27-yard field goal, this time good by Lattimer to trail 7-3 and that’s the way the first quarter ended.

The Tigers came right back, however, with Robb hitting split end Tom Thomson on a 29-yard pass at the Tech 10. After two unsuccessful plunges into the ling, Robb went to the air on the goaline and hit Ward who was wide open in the end zone.

McGeorge converted and Tech trailed 14-3 with 13:01 left in the first half.

The Tigers missed another opportunity to score on the next series when Joyce tossed an interception into the hands of Ray Wallace who returned to the Tech 21. But, as they did the entire first half, Memphis State got in close, and couldn’t punch the ball over for the score on the ground. Tech took over on its own 4.

Joyce went for the home run ball and an interference call on the Tigers’ Eric Harris who was defending against Billy Hardee, set up Tech’s only first half touchdown with a first and goal at the two. Barber scored on the next play on a powerful plunge. Lattimer kicked the PAT and Tech trailed 14-10.

Clifton Taylor broke a long run, shaking three tacklers to move downfield to the Tech 4. Three straight runs and a loss of a yard forced quarterback Robb to go to the air again, and he hit Ward again for the TD, his sixth scoring reception of the season.

With the PAT, Tech trailed 21-10 with only 1:30 left in the first half.

But things weren’t over yet. After losing the ball, Robb hit Ward on a long pass to the Tech 12, and with only five seconds showing on the clock, Darby hit Steve Delong on an option pass for a touchdown and that gave the Tigers a 28-10 halftime lead.