Rogers Founds Gobbler Thousand Yard Club

BLACKSBURG—Sophomore runner Phil Rogers of Gate City has become the founder, president and sole member in one afternoon of the Virginia Tech Single Season 1,000 Yard Club.

Rogers hit the line for a six yard gain in the second quarter with 7:40 remaining to become the first Tech runner in the 81-year history of football at the land grant university to run 1,000 yards in one season.

Early in the VMI game Saturday at Lane Stadium, Rogers cracked the old single season mark of 940 yards, set in 1969 by halfback Terry Smoot, on his first run from scrimmage.

Going into the season’s final game, Rogers had carried the ball 158 times for a net gain of 939 yards. Coming out of the contest, he had 175 carries for a net gain of 1,037 yards, the new Tech single season rushing record.

Head coach Charlie Coffey, who has had words of praise for Rogers and senior running back James Barber who teamed with the sophomore to provide the one-two running punch that has been the highlight of the season, had more of the same at his post-game news conference.

“Our two running backs have been outstanding players and consistent performers. (Phil) Rogers and (James) Barber are close to equal in ability. This combination has been the one thing I’ve been able to do this year."

Speaking of the senior, he commented: “We’ll miss James Barber. He had the ability and also lots of leadership qualities. He came out of nowhere. When he first came here he was a fumbler, he couldn’t catch the ball and he couldn’t make cuts. He overcame all these and became one of our best, most conscientious players."

As for a running mate for Rogers next year, Coffey said that if he had to pick one immediately he would choose freshman George Heath of Bristol, Tenn., but he noted there are plenty of other contenders. He named outstanding JV runners Charlie Brown of Pulaski, Danny Ludd of Baltimore, Md., and Reggie Robinson of St. Albans, W. Va.

One thing is certain and gives Hokie fans something to hope for in the future after the conclusion of the current dismal season: the first half of Tech’s running punch for next season will be Phil Rogers, the explosive Scott Countlian who is rewriting the record books at Virginia Tech.

THOUSAND YARDER! Sensational sophomore running back Phil Rogers of Gate City gained a net of 98 yards on 17 carries to break the all-time single season, rushing mark at Virginia Tech, in the VMI game Saturday. Rogers became Tech’s first player ever to run 1,000 yards in a single season. (NEWS MESSENER Photo by Carol Atwater)