VMI Survives Tech Threat; Pulls Off Upset

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BLACKSBURG—Virginia Military Institute's spirited defense denied Virginia Tech chances for victory in the last minute of play and came away from Lane Stadium with a 22-21 upset victory in Big Five football action Saturday.

Ronnie Norman, who gained 120 yards for his fifth game of the season, scored from six yards out with just over nine minutes left in the final period to put the Keydets ahead to stay.

Mike Cole booted a 45-yard field goal, Allen Morgan caught a 34-yard scoring pass from Tom Schultze and Keith Barefield added a touchdown on a four-yard run to lead the VMI offense.

Tech had a 10-yard pass-run play from Eddie Joyce to Ricky Scales for one score and Billy Schultze for another to give the Hokies a 14-10 halftime lead.

James Barber added the final Gobbler touchdown on a nine-yard run late in the third quarter. The Hokies were driving for a score late in the fourth period when the offense bogged down at the VMI 20 and Wayne Latimer attempted a 27-yard field goal.

The ball was wide left, but the Keydets were offsides on the play and Tech picked up a first down at the 13. Two plays later, Joyce fumbled and Jay Newcomer recovered at the five-yard line with 37 seconds left to preserve VMI's victory.

Tech's rushing tandem of Barber and Rogers combined for 225 yards, 98 by Rogers, who gained 78 on three carries. VMI's leading scorer for the Hokies with 1,038 yards and 90 points, Barber came up short on the scoreboard.

VMI received the opening kickoff and Barber fumbled on the kickoff return and Schultze bringing Bruce True took the ball 23 yards, moved to the Tech 26 where Cole kicked his field goal to give the Keydets a 9-0 lead with 10:49 left in the period.

Cole's field goal, the 16th of his career, set a Southern Conference record.

The Gobbler had possession only twice in the first period and were able to do no better than get to the VMI 20 before turning the ball over on downs.

John Nettles recovered a Rogers fumble at the VMI five-yard line early in the second period and the Keydets began a drive that took six minutes and 13 plays with the clincher being Schultze's pass over the middle to Morgan for the score.

Tech, trailing 14-0, began a drive from its own eight-yard line where Harden had been downed with the kickoff. Barber hit the left side of the line for eight yards and Joyce paced to Scales for seven. After Barber picked up nine more, Joyce rumbled in the left to come back to the right and faked the ball to Scales, who evaded two tacklers at the twenty and scampered into the end zone to complete a 14-yard scoring play.

The Keydets could not move the ball and were forced to punt to Harden who fell at the Tech 31. Joyce paced to Harden for 14, ran for three and was aided by a personal foul penalty which gave the Hokies a first down at the VMI 20. The freshman quarterback then passed to the left side where Harden bailed in the ball and set sail for the end zone. Latimer converted the point after and Tech took a 14-10 halftime lead to the dressing room.

Tech began the second half by marching 74 yards in five plays for its last touchdown. Barber cut loose for 34 and 13 yards, Rogers added 13 more. Then Barber carried the last time for nine yards and the score.

Following a Virginia Tech punt, VMI marched 77 yards as Schultze alternated passes with Morgan's running to set up the stage for Barefield's four-yard run. This closed the gap to five points with 2:30 left in the third quarter.

The Keydets went 80 yards for their final score after finally gaining a first down on 60-yard field goal attempt on the first play of the final period.

Norman carried twice for 32 yards and Schultze passed 14 yards to Frank DeLaite for a first down at the Tech 46. Schultze then hit three completions to Ronnie Moore for 11, 16 and 14 yards, setting up Norman's sixth yardage gap to paydirt.

After an exchange of punts, Tech started from its own 39 yard line and with the Joyce-to-Scales combination picking up yardage through the air and Rogers and Barber grounding it out on the ground, moved to the VMI 20 where Latimer's missed. See VMI, Pg. 2, Col. 1

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field goal attempt allowed the VMI fans a sigh of relief. The penalty, however, gave the Gobblers new life but Joyce's fumble ended expectations of winning.

Bob Thalman, coach of the Keydets, said, "When Tech fumbled—well, let's just say I was relieved, very relieved. We had good containment on the play and Gene Williams delivered his blow at just the right time. Jay (Newcomer) did a great job of covering it quickly."

Thalman added, "We stuck to our game plan for the most part. We never lost faith throughout the game and Ronnie Moore did a great job with those sideline receptions."

Disheartened Tech coach Charley Coffey commented, "That last play was designed to move the ball in the middle of the goalposts. I didn't know the ball had been fumbled; I had turned around and was making preparations for the field goal try."

Coffey added, "The game was probably decided when we didn't get anything on the board on the last three possessions of the third quarter."

Tech finished the season with a disappointing 2-9 record, while VMI closed the season with a 3-8 mark.