Rogers Sets Season Rushing Record

VMI Keydets Slip By Va. Tech Gobblers 22-21

The underdog Keydets from VMI recovered a Tech fumble with less than half minute to go in the contest to hang on to a 22-21 win over Va. Tech Saturday afternoon in Lane Stadium.

Tech, which had started out the season losing to Southern Conference and Big Five teams and ended the season against another Southern Conference and Big Five school, saw their record drop to 2-8 mark. Their worst season record in twenty-three years.

One ray of sunshine for the Gobblers was the fine ground game of sophomore Phil Rogers who carried 17 times for 88 yards which enabled him to break Terry Smoot's '69 rushing record for one season. Rogers ended with 1,086 yards to Smoot's record of 940.

Under the coolness of Tom Schultz and the excellent running of Ronnie Norman, a junior from Norfolk, who gained 183 yards on 27 carries, the Keydets took the opening kickoff and went 8 plays with place kicker Mike Clee booting a 45 yard field goal to give VMI a 3-0 lead.

Neither team could get inside the 20 yard line until midway through the second period when Tech drove from their own 46 to the VMI 10. Rogers then hit for six but, the ball was stripped from him and safety Gene Williams recovered for VMI at the four.

Keydet quarterback Tom Schultz, who was 14 of 18 including three interceptions and 207 yards, took the Keydets 66 yards on 13 plays as VMI mounted a 10-0 lead with a little over six minutes left in the first half.

In this touchdown drive Norman, the leading ground gainer in the game, carried five times for 34 yards with the big play in the series being the 33-yard touchdown pass over the middle to tight end and Allen Morgan.

Being down 10-0, Tech came right back to score twice on the fine running of Rogers and senior James Barber (22 carries for 127 yards) and the passing of freshman Eddie Joyce.

On the first scoring drive, Tech started on their own 8, went to the 16 as Barber picked up eight and grabbed a first down as Joyce threw seven yards to Rickey Scales. Rogers hit for nine to the 32. Joyce then threw the bomb to Scales who out ran Jimmy Lofin a linebacker and safety man Gene Williams for a 68 yard touchdown. Lofin added the extra point to cut the VMI lead to 17-0.

VMI failed to move the ball, punted 45 yards where the Gobblers drove 65 yards in four plays including a 15 yard penalty by VMI. In this drive, Tech's score came on a 35-yard pass from Joyce to Billy Hardee with 1:28 remaining in the half.

Tech came out of the dressing room fired up as Bruce Arana took the second half kickoff and returned it to the 36. Barber went around left end for 34 yards and then around the right side for 15 yards and another first at the Keydet 27. Rogers kicked for 13. Barber hit for nine. It was first and ten when Barber took the hand off and scrambled to his right for a Tech touchdown. Latimer added the extra point to make it 21-10.

After trading punts, VMI came to life as deadeye Schultz hit four of four and Norman gained 30 yards in three carries to give the Keydets a first down on the Tech four. Freshman Keith Barefield who carried 12 times for 43 yards, punched over for his first Keydet touchdown to make the score 21-16. VMI then went for a two point conversion but, the pass went incomplete to Morgan.

With the opening of the fourth quarter, Tech's field goal kicker Wayne Latimer attempted a 49 yarder which fell short, the Keydets took over and Barefield bucked seven tough yards to the 27, before fumbling the ball to Tech's Kent Henry.

Two incomplete passes and a 9 yard gainer by Rogers made it fourth and one at the Keydet 18. Latimer attempted a 34 yard field goal which went off to the left.

The Keydets again started on their 20, picked up six first downs as they drove 80 yards for the winning touchdown. Schultz, who continued to complete his passes at will, hit three three sandwiched in between the running of Norman to keep the Tech defense off balance. Norman scored the winning TD from 6 yards out. Schultz attempted another two-point conversion but, freshman Keith McGrater of Tech batted the ball away. However, VMI had regained the lead 22-21 with 9:21 remaining.

Once more the Gobblers began on offense but failed to mount a drive and were forced to punt. VMI hoping to gain a first down on the ground had to punt after gaining one yard in three attempts.

With five minutes remaining and Joyce at the controls, Tech started their last offensive drive for the season. From the 36 Joyce hit Scales for a nine yard pickup to the 45. Barber went three yards. Scales caught another pass to the VMI 37 and Rogers gained four yards. Scales latched on to a pass at VMI's 28 for a first down. Rogers gained four yards in two carries and Barber added two more yards to make it 4th and 4. Latimer attempted a 25 yard field goal which was no good but a VMI linebacker was offsides.

With the penalty, Tech had a first at the VMI 15 with 1:09 left. Rogers went around the right side for 12 and a first down at the 36. On the next play Joyce rolled left was hit and the ball fumbled to the ground where Don Newcomer of VMI recovered with seconds left and insuring the Keydets a Big win.

With the loss Va. Tech's defensive coordinator George McKinsey, who came to Tech in '71, turned in his resignation.

Touchdown Tech

With less than two minutes remaining in the half Eddie Joyce hits Billy Hardee (88) with a touchdown to give Tech the lead as Gene Williams (87) and Kirk Milton (41) watch Hardee haul in the pass. In the game Hardee caught three passes for 43 yards and one touchdown as the Hokies lost their last game to the VMI Keydets 22-21 before a crowd of 23,000. (Journal photo by Dan Calabani).