Wishbone Pleases Receiver Scales

By DENNIS LATTA
Times Sports Writer
BLACKSBURG — When Virginia Tech football coach Jimmy Sharpe announced that he was using the wishbone offense this year, fast-running Ricky Scales thought he had died and gone to heaven. He was finally getting a chance to show his stuff.

Scales is pass receiver extraordinaire for Tech. He is fast, has good hands and can run when he gets the ball. He'll be catching fewer passes with the wishbone but he'll have more of a chance to run and score.

"The wishbone will definitely be to my advantage," the senior from Martinsville said. "It advocates one-on-one coverage and that's what I want. It'll be just me against one man and that's great."

The wishbone is not known for its success in passing. It offers so many alternatives in the running game that the pass is a minor part of it. But because it has so many different ways of running, the defensive backs are kept busy and defenses can't afford to double cover a receiver.

"We might not throw as many times this year, but I think I'll catch as many passes," Scales pointed out. "If we throw 15 times a game I'll get about 10 of them. That's plenty."

According to Sharpe, "Every time the ball is snapped, Scales is a passing threat. The people out in the field have a responsibility to match the run so that gives Ricky time to be one on one."

"If our running games works well, we'll put a lot of pressure on the secondary. With the play-action, Ricky will be able to get further down field and will have more of a chance to break it open," Sharpe continued.

Directing the wishbone this year for Tech will be Bruce Arians at quarterback. Arians stepped in when Ricky Popp was injured last year but Arians injured a leg and saw only limited action.

"Every time I looked up last year we had a different quarterback. I think we had six during the season. Each quarterback had a different style and I had to get used to them," Scales said.

"Bruce is an excellent quarterback. I'm glad he's got the job. I don't think many people realize that Bruce can throw as well as he does. He is good in the wishbone."

Scales is hopeful that the new coaches, the new wishbone and the new starting quarterback will all blend well together so that Tech will come out a winner.

"I don't have any personal goals other than to win. I think that if we win it would help me as much in the long run as anything else," Scales claimed.

The long run he's referring to is his expected pro career. He is optimistic of being drafted by the pros and playing wide receiver in the NFL or CFL.

"We've been getting letters from some of the teams but they can't really contact me until the season is over," he explained. "I know there are scouts watching. Subconsciously you realize they're there but you try not to think about it."

The scouts won't be there to just see how well he can catch a pass or run. They'll be watching him as an all-around player and the wishbone will help him there.

"I'm learning to do things I've never really done before like block. I'm working on my blocking technique. I've never done much blocking, not even in high school. Making that block is often just as important as catching a pass. You have to be able to block for the running backs."

If Sharpe ever needs someone to defend the wishbone for him, Scales is his man. "I just didn't realize the wishbone had these many opportunities. I didn't know much about it when we started, but I know a lot about it now. It'll be good for me."

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