Hokies Near ‘Day’ Are Nipped, 28-25

By Bill Millsaps
Executive Sports Editor

DALLAS — Virginia Tech suffered an honorable defeat Saturday afternoon, bowing to a Southern Methodist University football team that had an overpowering edge in talent.

The score was 28-25, and it was a tribute to the smaller, slower Hokies that they made it so close before a Cotton Bowl Stadium crowd of 13,876, nearly 50,000 short of capacity.

“Gentlemen, our day is coming soon,” said new Tech coach Jimmy Sharpe after the game. That big day almost came in the last few minutes.

Down by 28-17 with three minutes left and the ball on their 20-yard line, the Hokies swept to a touchdown and a two-point conversion, both scored by quarterback Bruce Arians, in 1:09.

Then, Sharpe ordered an onside kick. The ball didn’t travel the prescribed 10 yards, however, and SMU recovered and ran out the clock to escape with the victory, its second in two games.

For the Hokies, now 0-2 with an even bigger, faster team (Houston) coming to Blacksburg next Saturday, the hero was Arians, a 6-1 senior. He hit on 13 of 20 passes for 204 yards and ran 12 times for 50 yards, including two touchdown jaunts off the Wishbone option.

The Hokies’ major problem was stopping the Mustangs’ ground game, built around big and powerful linemen who had their opposite numbers outweighed by 15 pounds per man. With those big ones up front pushing and shoving, SMU ground out 336 yards overland.

In the end, one big play did it. Sophomore quarterback Ricky Wesson sprinted 77 yards for a touchdown early in the fourth period for the Mustangs’ final score, a six-pointer that ultimately put coach Dave Smith’s team into what seemed to be an insurmountable 28-17 lead.

Later, much later, Tech made that lead seem very shaky.

In the beginning, there was some reason to think the Hokies might be in for an old-fashioned whipping. In the first period, SMU used their size优势 inside the Tech 10, only to cough up a fumble (altogether, the Mustangs fumbled nine times and lost two) at the Tech two-yard line, and miss a chip-shot field goal (with the wind) from 25 yards out.

Given two reprieves like that by their hard-pressed defense, the Hokies finally took advantage. They moved 58 yards on five plays in the second period to score and take a 7-0 lead after Greg Toal’s seven-yard TD run. The big play was Arians’ 31-yard pass to wide receiver Ricky Scales, who drew double and triple coverage all afternoon.

SMU came right back with an 87-yard, 10-play drive which ended with Wesson’s 35-yard touchdown pass to tight end Oscar Roan, a 6-4, 215 pounder.

On Tech’s first play from scrimmage following the kickoff, Arians completed a 13-yard pass to Jay Neal, but he fumbled and SMU’s Marc Cones recovered at the visitors’ 45.

Soon, the Mustangs had another score and the lead for good. They got the six-pointer on Wesson’s one-yard option to the left 25 seconds before halftime.

SMU made motions of turning the game into a rout when they took the second half kickoff and mounted an 80-yard touchdown drive that climaxed with Rex Garner’s four-yard burst over the left side.

Tech’s defense began getting

Continued on Page 4, Col. 3

Virginia Tech .......... 6 7 19 25
S. Methodist .......... 0 14 7 28

Tech — Toal, 7, run (Lattimer kick).
SMU — Wesson, 35, pass from Wesson (Thompson kick).
SMU — Wesson, 1, run (Thompson kick).
SMU — Gardner, 4, run (Thompson kick).
Tech — Arians, 2, run (Lattimer kick).
Tech — FG, Lattimer, 22.
SMU — Wesson, 77, run (Thompson kick).


STATISTICS

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