Houston a dud? Not likely

Gobblers plan upset

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Coach Jimmy Sharpe of Virginia Tech says he regards the talent-laden Houston football team as an active volcano ready to erupt at any moment—and he just hopes the Cougars don’t pick tomorrow afternoon to let off steam in Lane Stadium to prove their lava.

“T’aint no doubt about it,” says Sharpe. “Houston has as good a personnel as any team in the country. The pro scouts claim they have 17 or 18 bona fide top prospects on the squad. They are real impressive and the fact they are only 3-2 doesn’t mean a thing. When they are at their best it’s all over for most anyone they are playing. I just hope they aren’t at their best tomorrow.”

Coach Bill Yeoman of Houston is disappointed but not discouraged with his team. He takes a realistic view and says the team just got caught flat-footed at quarterback and played two of the top teams in the nation in Miami and Arizona State. The Cougars were regarded as one of the top 10 teams in the nation in most of the pre-season polls. But they were beaten 33-20 by Arizona State in their opener. They then beat a weak Rice team 21-0 and lost last week at Miami 26-3.

Despite all the experience and talent, on the team Houston didn’t have any real experience at the vital quarterback spot. David Husmann, a 6-2, 196-pound junior, is No. 1. He missed the opener with a knee injury and tomorrow will mark the first time he has played without a knee brace this season.

Chuck Fairbanks Jr., son of the former Oklahoma coach and now the coach of the New England Patriots, took over for the first game and is now Husmann’s relief. Fairbanks played less than 10 minutes last season and Husmann had only some 30 minutes of playing time behind the talented D. C. Nobles, who made like minimus for the Techmen for three seasons.

Tech has had another good week of practice and Sharpe is pleased with the progress. “But we still have to spend too much time on fundamentals and this puts us a day behind working on our game plan,” Sharpe said.

One bright note in the Tech camp is the return of linebacker Doug Thacker, a 5-11, 185-pound junior from Cave Spring High. Thacker injured his knee in the spring game, had an operation during the summer and missed the first two games.

“Thacker has been responding well in practice and he looks like he is ready to play,” said Sharpe. It likely will be just before the kickoff that Sharpe decides on starting Thacker in place of Jack Crews. Regardless, Thacker is slated for duty.

Sharpe is a realist. He knows Houston has a terrific weight, experience and talent advantage.

“I know they (Houston) realize this and they think they can just line up there and knock us down,” Sharpe said. “It will just be up to us to be a bit quicker and try to keep them off balance and guessing.”

With this in mind, Sharpe promises the Gobblers will show more offensive sets and formations than they have in their first two games. There also will probably be more passing and other offensive tactics to offset the Houston advantage in size and talent.

Bruce Ariana has done a commendable job at quarterback for Tech. His total offense of 47 yards ranks him fifth in the nation. He has 29 of 35 completions for 359 yards—246 of the yards go to senior wide receiver Ricky Scales.

Sharpe looks for Scales to draw double coverage tomorrow and he has plans to throw more to tight end Kevin Dick, to Jay Neal, who can give Tech a double wide end situation, and to the backs coming out of the backfield.

It would be nice to connect a few times with Phil Rogers and isolate him one-on-one with a Houston defender. Rogers is the top breakaway threat for Tech but has yet to shake loose this season. His longest run has been for only nine yards.

Tech’s game captains will be Ariana and running back George Heath on offense and strong safety Chuck Pederson and tackle Brent Bledsoe on defense.

But Bledsoe might be playing nose guard in place of Charlie Martin, who has worked little this week due to an ankle injury suffered in the loss at SMU.

Teaming with Husmann in

See HOUSTON, Pg. 15, Col. 1