Offense Plagues Tech, UVa

By BILL BRILL
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Virginia and Virginia Tech have football teams that could switch jerseys and you would hardly know the difference.

About the only difference now is the record. UVa has won a game, Tech has not. Of course, Tech still hasn’t played William & Mary.

Basically, the trouble with each team is a lack of offense, sometimes complicated by a lack of defense. It all boils down to a lack of quality athletes.

Neither of the new coaches, Sonny Randle or Jimmy Sharpe, should be blamed. Certainly there wasn’t much that either could do Saturday when Duke whipped UVa 27-7 and Houston overwhelmed Tech, 49-12.

Duke planned to stop the UVa air arm, specifically Scott Gardner to Ken Shelton. That tandem clicked in the first quarter for UVa’s lone score, but that was it. Duke rushed three men because it wasn’t afraid of the Virginia ground attack.

UVa has played without tailback Bill Copeland since the second quarter of the opening game. Fullback Mike Dowe has yet to play because of a sprained ankle.

“People know we can’t beat them running and they are going to make us run,” said one UVa official.

Duke used a 4-3 defense for the first time, and the three-man rush put pressure on Gardner the final three quarters. Randle placed all the blame on himself, although he berated his players constantly on the sidelines for what he considered lack of effort.

“I don’t understand it,” he said mournfully. “Nobody wants to play.”

UVa, now 1-2, plays at 1-3 Georgia Tech this week. Tech has no passing game and UVa completely stalled Duke’s rushes. But Hal Spears outpassed Gardner, who was No. 1 in the nation. If Virginia can stop the Georgia Tech wishbone, the Cavs have a chance to win. That is, if Sonny can find enough people who want to play his way.

Houston, the best 1-2 team in the nation, laughed at Virginia Tech’s ground game. Again Phil Rogers failed to make yardage. Bruce Arians had to pass and couldn’t, completing just three of 16.

Sharpe was dismayed, but he realizes there is little he can do except school his young charges and hope for a miracle. Tech simply doesn’t have the talent to stick with good teams, but there are several weak clubs on the rest of the schedule.

“We’re not going to pull up our dresses and go into the house and hide,” said Sharpe. “They’re not going to cancel the rest of the season because of this.”

Sharpe was really concerned with Tech’s kicking game, which should be decent. “There is no reason we can’t have a good kicking game,” said Sharpe. “That’s the No. 1 area for improvement.”

Houston ran back Tech’s first punt 42 yards, and blocked a second one for a touchdown.

The Hokies have only one more unreasonable game the rest of the way, that at Miami. Also on tap are the state schools, including VMI Saturday in Richmond, plus winless South Carolina and equally winless Florida State. There is an opportunity there for Tech to win several games, but not if it plays as it did against Houston.

VMI, meanwhile, believes it can beat the Hokies for the second straight year. The Keydets are 2-1 and their opening shutout of Furman looks big now that the Paladins have shut out William & Mary.

VMI’s 43-7 win over Davidson was its biggest point explosion since beating the same team, 46-21, in 1967. It was VMI’s easiest win since whipping Marshall 46-0 some 15 years ago.

VMI quarterback Tony Farry refuses to believe that Tech is as bad as its 0-3 record. “Everybody says Tech doesn’t have much,” said Farry, “but I don’t believe it.”

The VMI sparkplug was Ronnie Moore, who returned two punts for touchdowns and had a third TD return called back by a penalty. “We have the best team since I’ve been here,” said Moore. “The reason is we’re more experienced.”

Furman’s shocker all but eliminated W&M from the Southern Conference race. Richmond won its third straight close game by beating The Citadel, 27-24, on Terry Carter’s late field goal. The Spiders are unbeaten by a margin of seven points. Richmond and Furman play Saturday night in the second half of a Richmond twin bill. Tech and VMI play the Tobacco Bowl opener.

Maryland got its first win by ending North Carolina’s two-game streak in the mud at College Park, 24-12. The Terps dominated the game and may be the best team in the ACC. The only other contender is N.C. State, which won its fourth straight at Syracuse, 28-22, but only after having defensive problems. Clemson came from behind to upset Georgia Tech, 21-17, for its first win behind sub quarterback Mike O’Cain.