Tech vs. VMI: Expect ‘Smoke’

By Ray Filegar

Looking for an early line on the 26th Annual Tobacco Festival game scheduled for City Stadium Saturday afternoon? Try this one: Both teams are likely to come out smokin’. And to keep that in perspective, it could be the Ice Cream Bowl, and they would still be smokin’.

Virginia Military and Virginia Tech. You won’t find them in the Top Twenty. But it is a good bet they’ll be going after each other as if something similar is at stake.

The Gobblers (0-3) lead the series between the two schools, 40-23-5, and only twice since 1962 have the Keydets come up with a win. The last time, however, was less than a year ago in a season finale at Lane Stadium in Blacksburg, where the Keydets squeezed out a 22-21 victory.

Impact?

Page 16 in VMI’s current football guide is devoted to that upset, replete with pictures and some carefully chosen words, including: Last November 17th, VMI “made” its season a successful one by defeating Virginia Tech...

That was the third win of the season for the Keydets and there seems to be a little irony in the fact that this week VMI (2-1) could match that success in only the fourth game of the current campaign.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the Gobblers have had their problems — namely, Kentucky, SMU and Houston, in that order. And did that 49-12 pasting at the hands of the Cougars at Blacksburg over the weekend shake coach Jimmy Sharpe’s confident notion that, “We will improve”?

“”There ain’t no way to go but up, that’s for sure,” he replied. “No, we’re not discouraged ... we’re not pullin’ up our dresses and runnin’ to the house, if that’s what you mean.”

Sharpe sees his team’s problem as being many things, most notably, “We’re just not attacking people.” Defensively or offensively.

Admittedly, the Hokies were outmanned in each of their first three games. They were beaten by teams that, quite frankly, should have beaten them.

Yet, Sharpe declares, “Even if we are outmanned, and we were, we’ve got to make the big play.” Defensively and offensively.

“And we’ve got to execute, consistently.” Defensively and offensively.

And if VMI isn’t exactly in a class with Tech’s previous three opponents, Sharpe knows the Gobblers can’t wait any longer to, as someone once said, get with the program.

“NEXT WEEK,” said Tech tight end Kevin Dick after the loss to Houston, “there won’t be any excuses.” Re-size, quickness, et al.

“We’ll see what we can do with people our size,” he added. “And see what we are made of.”

As for that early line, it should be obvious that there could be fire in all that smoke. And neither Tech nor VMI wants to get burned.