Suddenly, just as quickly as you can pull away from your Virginia Tech's football season may have turned around.
Nothing, it seems, can help a tow team as much as a trip to Columbia, S.C. That Tech greeted South Carolina's Gamecocks like long-lost cousins.
Forget that USC has lost five straight this year, or that Paul Dietzel is a mystery as coach, or that the Gamecocks may well be playing out the string.
It seemed that Tech, running the wishbone to perfection, railed from a 17-7 halftime deficit to beat the Gamecocks, 31-17. It was the first win for Coach Jimmy Sharpe, and it could not have come at a better time.

Tech officials have said privately that what this team needs is to know how to win. There was some question as to whether a club that was shredded last year in a 29-9 campaign had that ability.
But along came the Gamecocks. Tech could not have wished for more. Even without gaining a yard passing for the second straight week, the Hokie offense was dominant.

What had to give Virginia Coach Sonny Randle and four UVa assistants, scouting the Tech balance. All three running backs, Roxoco Coles, Full Rogers and George Heath, gained 170 yards. Quarterback Bruce Ariens, shuffling off his elbow injury, scored twice.

Tech gained 414 yards on the ground after getting 271 in the losing effort against VMI. While Tech's air arm seems to have evaporated, the wishbone has come on strong.

Obviously the victory for Tech came at the best possible time. One more loss could mean that the Hokies can face their six first games knowing they are outmatched only against Maryland. The two foes—Arkansas, West Virginia, Florida State and West Virginia—are all last Saturday.

Specifically, it was the only incomplete of the half that may have saved State from a stunning loss. Down 21-0, State's Eddie Witherspoon fumbled a Buckeye pass in the third quarter. The ball popped free and was recovered by UVa, but was ruled no completion. State had already had five first half turnovers. The Pack went on to score in that drive and pulled it out a pair of two-point conversions.

"We had good practices all week," said Gardner. "We really took it to them, it's a tough loss." The Cavs must now regroup after the second straight heartbreaking setback to play Tech Saturday in Charlottesville, knowing full well that the Hokies will come to town all steamed up. Meanwhile, UVa's defense gave the Keydets a 29-9 win over The Citadel and was its Southern Conference record to 3-0. The Keydets are now 4-1, their best start since 1967. UVa now has an excellent chance to win at least seven games for the first time since 1974.

"We're right on schedule," said a pleased Coach Bob Turnham. The Keydets now 4-1, the Big Eight is eyeing the SC championship, something that would have seemed impossible in the summer. Actually, theKeydets were not too bad a get back when Furman led East Carolina 12-0 in the last quarter, but the Paladins came on to win 26-13 in the last minute. "I don't see any difference between VMI, Richmond and William & Mary," said Citadel Coach Bobby Ross, whose team lost to all three. But VMI has been coming on strong lately while the Spider and Indians have faded. Richmond was mauled by a 3-6 small college team, Ball State, 38-23, while Boston College whipped W&M, 31-16.

The Beamer has established itself as the team to beat with a crushing 41-0 whipping of a Cl Irnest team that had beaten Georgia Tech and Georgia on successive weeks.

State, the defending champ, must gear itself for road games the next Saturdays at North Carolina and Mary- land. The Tar Heels blew one in Georgia Tech, 29-28, on a two panorama. Southern Conference run in the last 36 seconds. The tandems that hit the two-pointer, Rudy Allen to Jimmy Robinson, had beaten UVa with 37 seconds left the week before.