Rogers Leads ‘Machine’ To Victory

The Mean Machine proved meaner than the Headhunters, at least on the scoreboard, and won the annual Virginia Tech Spring Game, 31-13, Saturday at Lane Stadium.

Led by Phil Rogers, who has been undergoing an experiment at quarterback, the Machine took advantage of several Headhunter mistakes to gain the victory.

Greg Payne, a junior defensive back from Hampton, was the first to capitalize as he took one of David DelHart's punts and rambled 74 yards for a touchdown with 6:10 left in the first period. Wayne Latimer's extra point gave the Mean Machine a 7-0 lead.

But the Headhunters, basically Tech's No. 1 defensive unit and No. 2 offense, tied it on the next series of downs, marching 75 yards behind quarterback Michael Barnes, and on the running of Morris Blueford and Tony Houff. They scored with just 32 seconds left in the period on a two-yard plunge by Houff. Ken Tomeo added the tying point.

At the start of the second quarter the Machine edged its way into Headhunter territory with the help of a 16-yard screen pass from Rogers to Roscoe Coles on third down and then on third and eight George Heath broke several tackles and went 44 yards for the TD that actually put the Mean Machine in front to stay, 13-7. Greg Mullinax was stopped short on a try for two points after grabbing a bad snap on the extra point attempt.

That’s the way it stood for most of the third quarter as well.

Toward the end of the period the Machine began a drive at its own 20 which penetrated to the Headhunter 47 and then received a 32-yard pass interference penalty which helped set up its next touchdown. That came just four plays later when Rogers scored on a keeper to his right from three yards out with 19 seconds to go in the quarter. Rogers was stopped short on a fourth down and the Machine took over and promptly put the ball in the end zone.

Rogers gained five yards on the first play and got 15 more as a result of a face mask penalty and then raced 23 yards around the right side virtually untouched to score. Latimer's PAT missed.

The Headhunters closed the gap somewhat with a 75-yard drive engineered by junior college transfer quarterback John Mason. The two biggest plays were a 16-yard pass to Dale Babione and then a screen pass to Dick Holloway who caught it on the right side, cut back across the middle and went 40 yards for the score.

Barnes had to keep on the extra point because of a bad snap and was stopped just short of the goal line by John Groover.

The Machine then ate up quite a bit of time with a 12-play drive that stopped at the Headhunter 42, but the losers were forced to take over on the one-yard line when Bruce McDaniel had a punt downed at that spot. They got as far as their own 35 before being stopped on fourth down and the Machine took over and promptly put the ball in the end zone. It took just four plays with Chuck Nuttlyoumbe scoring from the three, Rogers was stopped by Bill Schewes on a two-point attempt.

Statistically, Heath was the leading ground gainer with 67 yards in six carries, while Blueford had 64 and Houff 52.

Rogers connected on two of four passes he threw, while Barnes was 4-10 for 96 yards and Mason 5-10 for 91.