Sharpe, Pell Leave Feudin' and Fussin' to Players

By JACK BOAGKTY
Sports Writer

That long-awaited football confrontation—Jimmy Sharpe and Charley Pell—won't be played today as scheduled at 1:30 in Blacksburg.

But before muttering "dad-gummit" and leaving your stadium blanket in moth balls, it should be noted that there's still a great deal of fine football to be played in the state of Virginia.

That's because Virginia and Virginia Tech coaching sidekicks do plan to appear on the sidelines today. They're just going to leave the fussin' and fightin' to somebody else.

In one of four games involving Virginia Big Five teams being played in the state, Tech entertainers Clemson and Virginia hosts two of the state's major teams—Virginia and Richmond and William and Mary—also will play at home, while W&L has an open date.

But most of the interest in today's state schedule will be directed elsewhere. Virginia's Gobbler fans are looking for their first win in three starts while Pell's Clemson club owns a 2-1 record that has surprised many.

In a story that seemingly has been told as much as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Pell and Sharpe have both endured since the former got the Tech job after the 1975 season to become a Clemson assistant.

And while both coaches play down their roles in the drama which fortunately has kept Virginia Tech off the sofa opus of sorts, it should be realized that this will be something more than a match between coaches whose teams pass in the night.

Sharpe said star linebacker Rick Razzano would return to regular duty this week after being sidelined a week ago. Larry Fuller, the speedy halfback whose confidence wobbled after he limped out, also will play for the first time this year.

Pell realizes that while the Tech players know him best, he is the least known player in the Clemson team when they're told this is a big game for the two football Tech assistants.

"The team is the next opponent," said Pell, a defensive specialist. "But I don't think that I know enough about our own Tech team to be surprised by their running backs and a good defensive line on offense."

Nothing else, this is a match of coaching wits between Pell and Sharpe and they are personal, says "dad-gummit" (Sharpe) and "dad-gum (Pell)." It also marks the return of Danny Ford to Blacksburg, Ford, who was Sharpe's offensive coordinator 11 years ago, is now the Tigers' assistant head coach.

"It's a dad-gum good game we're playing for today," said Pell. "We don't have the mental strength to lose.

"We sure wouldn't be very good. But I hope I'm half intelligent enough to realize that we're playing Virginia Tech, not Coach Sharpe."

Clemson last opened its, 21-14 against Maryland, then came back to edge Georgia, 7-6 before hammering Maryland, 34-6. Tech losses have come against highly-regarded Texas A&M and Memphis.

"We're about 10 to 12 plays away from what we wanted (two wins)," said Sharpe. "Clemson plays good defense; and as far as I'm concerned we beat ourselves in the first two games with mistakes.

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Because neither Pell nor Sharpe are mentally troubled, he's there when they're needed.

Despite whatever emotional edges are instilled elsewhere, there is a two-point-play—that despite the fact that Jimmy Johnson and Charley Pell both have knee injuries at Georgia Tech. Pell also says he has "a serious situation with depth. We've lost our backup tight end, tackle and center."

Two players will join Pell and Ford for a "homecoming." One will be Clemson cornerback Ron West, the former Martinsville High star who has recovered following an appendectomy two weeks ago. And playing on the Tigers' kickoff team will be Bill Ford, who was a backup tackle. The Year in the 1976 season from Andrew Lewis. Meanwhile, Lewis Neal, who preceded Britts by one season as the Tech's best defensive player out of Patrick Henry, should see quite a bit of work at linebacker for Tech.

"We're tired," Pell claims. "We've gone through three wars and we're on the road for the third one since the 11th of the month, and our team is not at its best."

Clemson has been at war for three weeks. Virginia must be in the Hundred Years War. The Cavaliers, who must concern themselves with scoring touchdowns in order to win one of the two remaining games, entertain West Virginia (2-1) at Scott Stadium.

The Mountaineers beat perennial Atlantic Coast Conference champ Maryland last week losing at Kentucky wide receiver.

Meanwhile, UVa has just one touch- down in three losses and is a 21-point underdog.

In the South, the Spartans (2-1) of the expansive North Carolina State (3-1). The Eagles' only loss was a 17-15 decision against Southeastern Conference staples. State has averaged 28 points a game and the air much more than Big Five follow are used to seeing. In comparison, UR has 21 points—not per game, but per season.

William and Mary takes a 2-2 record into its game with Virginia Tech (2-1). It's the team's first home game in four weeks, but Coach Jim Root only hopes his W&L club isn't looking too far ahead to next week's Tobacco Bowl game in Richmond against Tech.

Speaking of Tobacco, there's three afternoons on the road on that name in North Carolina to-day featuring ACC squads. At Chapel Hill, UNC (2-1) meets 13th-ranked Texas Tech, which is playing without star quarterback Rodney Allison. He has a broken leg. UNC should win by a good margin.

At Durham, Duke (1-2-1) takes a 6-point victory over 2-1 Navy Club. And Wake Forest visit Purdue in an 11-underdog in a battle of teams with 1-2 records.

In the ACC Conference, a game that could go a long way towards determining the league title sends Marshall (2-1) to Boone, N.C., to meet the disappoint- ing 1-2-1 Bucs. On the other hand, the Pittsburgh (3-1-2) of the Western Carolina (1-3) goes to Furman (2-1) for a night game, while non-league games have Presbyterian at the Citadel (2-1) and UT-Chattanooga (2-1) host Middle Tennessee.

Ferrum (3-0), goes to Grand Rapids as the third ranked ranker faces rival power, while Madison (2-1) entertains Sheboygan.

In small college state games, Washington and Lee is 3-1 going into a 6-point game between 1-1 clubs, and winless Bridgewater visit Hampden-Sydney (2-1), Gardner-Webb will be in Lynchburg to face Liberty.

Baptist.