VPI Never Had a Chance

By BILL BRILL
Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG – The return of the prodigal son was a smashing success.

For Clemson.

Scoring 21 points before Virginia Tech got even a first down, Clemson thrashed the Hokies, 31-13, Saturday afternoon to provide Coach Charlie Pell with his sweetest victory.

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The happy Clemson players understood. They gave Pell the game ball.

Under heavy skies that yielded a game-long deluge, Clemson totally dominated the hapless Hokies, who lost their third game of 1977 and their sixth in a row over two seasons.

Thanks to the sure-handed play of quarterback Steve Fuller and two long punt returns by Willie Jordan, Clemson relied on three quick touchdowns and sent the crowd of 34,000 scurrying for the exits long before halftime.

By intermission, with Clemson ahead 28-7, only a smattering of drenched spectators remained, many of them the ever-faithful Tiger faithful. They wanted to stick around to watch Clemson's third straight road victory after an opening loss to Maryland. It was the first time in 29 years that a Clemson team had won three straight on the road.

This one was strictly no contest, but rather a first-round knockout for Pell and his chief assistant, Danny Ford, who also coached at Tech until joining Pell last December.

Pell, his shirt covered with mud after accidentally being knocked to the ground during the game by Tech's Bill Housewright, was calm in victory, yet clearly he was satisfied.

He said all the right things, praising Sharpe and the outclassed Hokies ("They'll be all right; they're a good team").

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No doubt there were a lot of disgruntled Hokies who wish Pell and Ford still called Blacksburg home.

Tech never had a chance as the Tigers dispelled any question as to whether they were ready to play after three consecutive emotional contests.

A stout Clemson defense, Jordan's punt return, and the running and passing of Fuller—a 64 junior honor student—enabled Clemson to roll up a 21-6 lead before the Hokies made as much as a first down.

Jordan returned the first of George Roberts' booming punts 22 yards, and a Tech personal foul tacked on 15 more yards to give the Tigers the ball at the Gobbler 36.

Nine plays later, Fuller scored from the one. He set it up with two passes to Jerry Butler, good for 26 yards.

Again Tech had to punt, and this time only a saving tackle by Roberts prevented...

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