No Explanation For Tech Loss

By BOB MCELLEND
Metro Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG — Lewis Neal stood alone in the showers—continually scrubbing himself as though there was a chance he might wash away what just had happened to Virginia Tech on the wet and muddy field at Lane Stadium Saturday.

"I really don't want to talk about it," said the sophomore linebacker from Patrick Henry in Roanoke. "It's something you will need a long time to get over. I really can't explain what happened or how it did." Neal, whose defensive play was one of the few bright spots for the Gobblers in a 31-13 lashing from a fired up bunch of Tigers from Clemson University, was not alone in his feelings.

Even the Tigers admitted they were surprised at the way they handled the Gobblers both defensively and offensively.

Clemson middle guard Rich Tutem might have had an answer for the way the Tiger defense played—especially in the way he held Roscoe Coles to a mere 36 yards rushing.

Tutem said a Clemson fan from Blacksburg had sent a news clipping about Coles, in which the Hokie running back said he was able to run so well because he had the best offensive line in the country.

"We got about 50 copies of the story printed and gave it to every player on defense," Tutem said. "We were determined to hold him under 50 yards. He's a great back but we were just too much for him today."

Two other Gobblers were as stunned as Neal.

"I don't know," said tight end Mickey Fitzgerald. "I think we all took it for granted that the other person was up. We didn't try to get each other up as much as we should.

"Sure I'm surprised at the score. I just don't know how it happened; but it did."

Center Mike Heizer called it a "nightmare."

"I don't know what to tell you," Heizer said. "We've had good practices all week. We had a lot of meetings of just the players—no coaches. We knew how much it meant to Coach Sharpe.

"Maybe we overdid it. Maybe we should have played it low key. I don't know, but whatever we did, it was the wrong thing."

The Clemson players said Coach Charley Pell had made no special issue of the game or the fact he and assistant Danny Ford badly wanted a victory over their former boss (Sharpe) and the Gobblers.

"We really didn't do much this week," said Tutem. "But just before the game, it seemed as though we all erupted together. It happened during warmups. We really got excited for the first time.

"Heck, we all knew we were ready. When we went back in before the game we were so relaxed we just joked around. Nothing much was said about the game."

Clemson quarterback Steve Fuller, who tore the Tech defense apart—something which neither Texas A&M nor Memphis State had been able to do—had his ideas on the game.

"We jumped on them quick. I could tell it sort of killed their enthusiasm," Fuller said. "We knew they would be sky high and have blood in their eyes. But it looked like they were shot when we got that early lead. We knew the kind of offense they had and on the wet field we didn't think they could come back.

"Maybe we played it too close and let up after we went ahead 21-0. But when they scored, we got mad and got us another touchdown. The second half we just played it nice and easy. But to be honest, I was surprised at the way we won."

Two Roanoke area players had minor parts in the victory. Star cornerback Rex Varn of Martinsville played some for Clemson, after recovering from an appendectomy.

"I didn't get to practice full speed all week," said Varn, who was a star last year as a freshman. "But I felt pretty good out there. Man, we've got one heck of a team."

The sentiments were echoed by freshman Tiger cornerback Billy Britt of Salem, who saw some action on the kicking teams.

"I never saw so much spirit," Britt said. "I'm not playing too much but I love it. I'm just happy to be a part of it all."

Pell has molded a solid team at Clemson. The Tigers might not be as deep as they would like. But they do have some talent and they think they are good.

"Coach Pell is one heck of a coach," said senior running back Kenny Callcutt. "He has us all together. He made us believe in ourselves and in our team. I really think we should be ranked. We are getting better all the time."

Clemson now has three straight wins after a close opening loss to Maryland. The next five games are Atlantic Coast Conference affairs with Virginia, Duke, N.C. State, Wake Forest and North Carolina. Then come closers at home to Notre Dame and at South Carolina.

"We are on our way," said Tutem. "If we are not ranked this week, we will get there before the season is over. I really think our toughest game will be against North Carolina. But we aren't taking any of them easy."

The emotions from the Tech side were entirely different. The Gobblers have lost three straight and next up is a game in Richmond next Saturday with William and Mary.

"I know we should be winning," said Fitzgerald. "We're missing just little things. But we'll get together."

Heizer still was experiencing his nightmare. "I wished I could tell you something good," he said. "But I can't, this hurts too much."

But there's always tomorrow—or next week. But thank goodness, there will be no more invasions by Clemson and Charlie Pell this season.