Tech Virginia Feel Weak Quarterbacking "Is Hurting"

Not that Sharpe is making excuses. He realizes that the conditions were the same for both teams, that even if Clemson had been penalized on its second touchdown, the Tigers still would have won the game. More than anything, he understands that the Hokies just didn’t do the job on defense.

"Their guy (Steve Fuller) threw the ball like it was a breeze even raining, “I moaned, and, "how did we throw it?" About like my mother. I don’t think our quarterback could throw all the balls because a 150-yard afternoon by Roscoe Cole can do a lot for you offensively. But, I feel that with a seasoned quarterback, we might have come out of September 3-0."

While the Hokies were struggling, opponents were winning too. Case in point have had their biggest days against the Tech defense. At the start of the year, Sharpe felt his secondary was a strength but injuries have helped turn it into a relative weakness.

However, though the loss on quarterback or the loss of the secondary would also be unfair. More than anything, Tech simply wasn’t ready to play Saturday, something which was not the case in opening losses to Texas A&M and Memphis State.

"I didn’t sleep a wink last night,” said Sharpe, "and it was a real struggle getting through the TV show. Between you and me and all the others in the world, I may have gotten my team a little too high a little too quick last week."

"It’s time they stopped trying to win one for me and won one for themselves. Our slate is clean: we’re 18-18 since we got here. Our next three games, all with in-state schools, are as big a challenge as we’ve faced."

The unofficial champion of Georgia after knocking off No. 1 Georgia Tech in successive weeks, Clemson might be going for that distinctia in Virginia, as Coach Dick Bestwick saw marked improvement in a 13-3 loss to West Virginia but the schedule isn’t getting any easier for the weary, 8-4 Cavaliers.

"I would think that both Clemson and N.C. State have a shot at the Most at the Top 20 this week,” said Bestwick. "And, if they are, that would put the Hokies on the board. We’ve played in the Top 20 at one time or another. Together, our opponents so far is 13-5 and I don’t know anybody with a schedule like that (VPI foes are 13-5)."

A 21-point underdog to West Virginia (at that, a local bookmaker says he received 150 bets on the Mount at the Top 20 in the last game against Virginia), the Cavaliers played one of their best games ever defensively. With Billy Hines (77 yards), they also picked up 150 yards on the ground, not counting 40 yards in quarterback sacks.

But, like Tech, Virginia won’t go any where until it gets decent quarterbacking. "I don’t know what it is with our people, whether it is experience or plain talent," said Bestwick. "But, your quarterback has got to be able to do one thing or another well — either execute the option or throw the football — and right now Brian Shumock is doing neither.

He continued, "We need something big to happen for us. If we had gotten a first down on fourth-and one at midfield against Duke, it very easily could have been a 10-point game. I realize we’ve been the butt of everybody’s jokes but I saw enough good things Saturday to think that one of these days we’re going to kick somebody else’s butt."

That’s not to say Bestwick expects the Cavaliers to become a powerhouse next night, at lest not by Saturday. "You’d think Clemson might have a letdown one of these days, but against Virginia, it would be tough for one of the West Virginia schools to beat this might be their biggest crowd ever. Those people hanging from the rafters won’t let them have a letdown."

"How talented is Clemson? Well, they have 44 lettermen. I can see why Red Parker didn’t want to get tired."

Far from oblivious to going-on in the state over the weekend, VMi Coach Bob Thalman still enjoyed his one-week sabbatical from the college football was. "It was good for the team, too,” said Thalman, who was particularly pleased that quarter- back Robbie Clark’s hip pointer has had time to heal.

After tough losses at Army and East Carolina, the Keydets will be home for three of the next four games, a first during Thalman’s seven years at Lexington. Saturday’s game with Richmond also marks the first time the Keydets have played the Spiders at VMI.

Earlier this season, VMI beat William in Mary for only the second time in 14 years. When asked to recall VMI’s last win over Richmond, Thalman demurred, saying "it was so long ago I don’t even want to think about it."

The Keydets’ last win in the series came in 1966, 34-20, and Richmond has shut out VMI in the last six meetings. Thalman was not particularly happy with a 43-0 thrashing last year but only said Sunday that "we’ve set our sights on playing as well as we can."

Whatever the outcome, next Saturday’s game (VMI plays William and Mary) should produce at least two in-state jobs. Ater a 5-14 start, it will be about time for the seemingly mid-masted "Big Free..."