Tech Wins Skirmishes, AND the ‘War,’ 17-8

By Harold Pearson

Sometimes you win the skirmishes and lose the war.

Not so yesterday, while an irritating drizzle fell on a Tobacco Festival gathering of 14,406 at City Stadium. Virginia Tech controlled the action in most of the important skirmishes and won the war. The Hokies, who had lost six straight going three games back into '76 season, forced William and Mary into an inordinate amount of errors and took advantage of enough of them to post a 17-8 win.

"I almost forgot what it's like," said Tech coach Jim Symes, of the move to a 1-3 record, "but the players were convinced it was a matter of putting it all together."

The Tech offense, despite a misfiring 333 total yards, still has a lot of pieces missing, but between what the Hokies defense did to the Indians and what the Indians did to themselves, there was enough — barely.

"I know we moved the ball," said W&M coach Jim Root, "but we shut ourselves down. I know they made some good plays, but we were our own worst enemy."

"It's hard to argue that point. The evidence is overwhelming. W&M rolled up 432 yards total offense but was unable to score until after Tech had put 17 points on the board and only 5-52 was left in the 29th Tobacco Festival outing."

There were such things as two consecutive major penalties (holding, clipping) just when it looked as if the Indians were in scoring motion. Then, the Tribe fumbled the ball away three straight times in the next six minutes.

One of those was a dropped punt, which Mark Steadman fell on for Tech at the W&M 13. When the Hokies failed to score with four downs from the two, it secured the Indians had dodged the bullet.

"I can't say enough about how well the defensive unit played," said Root. "They had their backs to the wall time and time again."

Hardly a minute after that defense had held off the Hokies following the dropped punt, Jimmy Kruis was knocked loose from the ball hit the W&M seven and linebacker Jerry Sheehan covered for Tech at the eight.

Paul Engle turned that into a 23-yard field goal with 9:19 left until the crowning of the Tobacco Queen and the count was still 3-9. Tech, when Miss Wilson Dee Dee Glasgow became Queen of Tobaccooland.

Steve Libassi's attempt to tie from 48 yards at 5:50 hit the left upright and bounded back. Before the third period had reached its midpoint, two things happened which well could have been the difference, despite everything the Indians had done to themselves up to and after that point. For No. 1, Tech opened the second half with an onside kick that was blackboard perfect, Henry Bradley grabbing the bouncing ball for the Hokies at W&M's 42.

"It was set up for me to catch the ball and keep running," said the senior defensive back, "but I was so intent on catching the ball that I forgot about running. I thought I was going to have to take somebody on to get the ball."

He didn't have to take anybody on, but the Tech offense could not take it in. Quarterback David Lamie fumbling it away to Indian Dan Furnick at the 11 after being hit by Rolfe Carawan.

However, W&M's attempt to continue on Page 9, Col. 2.