Sharpe’s Gamble Pays Off for Gobblers

Bill Brill

W&M, which had goal-awful field position the entire first half, was in a jam again. Although Tech fell to score on this possession, fumbling the ball away at the W&M 11, the Indians were backed up once more and Tech tallied after getting the ball back on an interception.

“Traid was a bell of a call,” said Root. “It was a gamble,” conceded Sharpe, “because if we don’t get it, they have it at midfield. But we wanted to make something happen in the first five minutes of the half.”

The onsides kick was typical of what happened to the Indians the whole game. They lost the ball eight times—four fumbles and four interceptions—which negated a whopping 423 total offense bag.

“We had all the yards in the world but not enough points,” Root moaned.

The Tribe had other problems with the kicking game. Punter Joe Agee’s only efforts were woeful, 19 and 24 yards. Placekicker Steve Libassi’s 48-yard first-half field goal was the only one to get it 3-0 hit the left upright and bounced back. “That was typical of the whole game,” said Root.

The other big play came on the first play of the fourth quarter. Trailing 10-0, W&M had a second goal and at the Tech four. Root called for a pass.

Quarterback Tom Rozantz, rushed on the play, heaved too quickly and flipped a gentle toss into the end zone to Dennis Windmuller. Unfortunately for W&M, Windmuller plays for Tech.

Two plays later, Tech quarterback David Lamie rolled left, got a perfect block when two Indians ran together, and raced 77 yards for the clinching touchdown. Instead of a 10-7 game, Tech was ahead 17-0.

“Traid did it,” said Root. “Damn, I wish I hadn’t called that play. I think Tommy (Rozantz) is going to be sick when he sees the film, because I think the receiver was open, but I just wish I hadn’t made the call.”

Although Lamie got the player of the game award for his two touchdowns, in truth the trophy should have gone to the defenders. Led by Gary Smith, making his first appearance of the year following a shoulder separation, and linebacker Jerry Sheehan, the Hokies came up with all of the big plays.

In the first three losses this year, the Tech secondary has been porous. But on this day, drizzling afternoon, the Hokie defense came through. Smith provided one of the interceptions and also saved a touchdown when he pulled down Jimmy Kravis from behind in the first quarter.

Sheehan was all over the place. He had an amazing 31 tackles, 19 of them solo, and recovered a pair of fumbles.

Sharpe, who has walked down Heartbreak Alley all fall, was all smiles in the enthusiastic Tech dressing room.

“I’d almost forgotten what it’s like to win,” he said. Asked if this victory would wipe out a lot of the past problems, he said, “I don’t know any medicine better than a win.”

The Hokies had not lost seven straight games since 1951. Now, with this win, the Tech season suddenly could turn around. The next two games are against helpless Virginia and inept Richmond, with just one victory between them.

“We got started late,” said a Tech assistant, “but now we’re going.”

Linebacker Rick Razzano agreed. “We’re on our way,” he yelled as he led the charge into the dressing room.

Although Rozantz wound up with 267 yards in offense, the star of last year’s 27-15 W&M victory couldn’t come up with the key plays.

“I almost didn’t start him today,” admitted Root. “He’s had that knee problem all year and it looked like it was the second quarter before he even got loosened up.”

The game was far from a classic, what with 13 turnovers and numerous other mistakes. But when a team has lost for so long, it will settle for any kind of win.

Root, ever the philosopher, summed it all up with an ancient cliche. “We had enough big plays on offense and defense to win, but it wasn’t in the cards.”

The gambler holding the winning cards was Sharpie. He made the call that enabled Tech to keep the momentum, and W&M inevitably succumbed to the odds.

Tech’s Gary Smith (24) and Jerry Sheehan Break Up Pass Intended for Ken Cloud of William & Mary

Staff Photo by John Cook