VPI Presses Big 5 Hopes Against UVA

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Look ee here! Just when things looked darkest for Virginia Tech's football fortunes, there's now a "bowl" victory in the bag, and the chance to move up to a second leg on a championship ladder is in the offing.

What championship? Well, beating William and Mary (17-8) last weekend not only gained the Gobblers a Richmond Tobacco Bowl trophy, but it marked the launch point into the middle of a three-weeks series that can possibly earn them at least a share of the Virginia Big Five title.

By stomping past University of Virginia this Saturday (at 1:30 p.m. in Lane Stadium, Blacksburg), Coach Jimmy Sharpe’s Gobblers can advance to 2-0 in the Big Five and make it 3-0 against Richmond in the Capital City next weekend.

The Techmen will be favored in both contests, and by no less than 17 points against Dick Bestwick’s ill-starred Cavaliers. If forecasts hold true, then only a triumph over Virginia Military Institute (Nov. 26) would be required to cinch the Big Five crown, no matter how VMI and UVA fare in their clash Nov. 5.

Yet it may not be as simple as it looks. None of Tech's remaining State rivals like anything much better than embarrassing the Gobblers, and right now not many football teams in the land could be any hungrier than UVA's winless (0-5) Cavaliers to shift the sting of derision to someone else.

As of the moment, Virginia's best hopes for upsetting Tech are linked to history, however, in a series like this, which the Blacksburg gridders lead 29-25-4, history quite often is the source

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GOBBLERS’ GENE BUNN
Roadblock To Virginia Air Game

History ‘Spread’ Note

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of great stimulus to underdogs.

What history and the "game fact sheets" show is that in the last three UVA-Tech meetings, the winner’s margin has been seven points or less.

If Virginia loses by less than seven, everyone in Cavalier Country would accept that as a moral victory, but UVA Coach Bestwick — more than likely — is thinking of the seven-or-less historical fact in much brighter terms.

What Bestwick obviously could feel is that if his Cavaliers can stay that close to Tech, then there's a chance to win, and UVA hasn't done that in its last seven games — five in 1977 and its last two of the season.

Worse than that, while history may presage an average seven-points difference, the Cavaliers haven't been able to muster more than seven points to date this year, and they came on a touchdown aided by a pass interference penalty against Duke.

So, while Bestwick goes back and forth to the drawing board to generate an offense — of almost any kind — that’ll take advantage of the historical seven-point spread, Sharpe at Tech predictably needs to look only to sustaining the offensive momentum his Gobblers re-discovered against W&M last week.

While a Tech victory, by seven or whatever, would be most welcome after their earlier three-game losing slump, it must be fully expected that the Gobblers will be gunning for much more.

Prestige outside the State as well as in the Big Five has to be uppermost in the Gobblers' minds. It figures this way:

UVA's previous five conquerors averaged over 30 points per game, and those same five teams have lost an aggregate of only four (4) games, which makes them somewhat of an elite group.

So, if Tech should win Saturday, its record would still be a rather mediocre 2-3, and the only way to give it added lustre would be to win handily.

Toward that end, Sharpe's Gobblers will be looking to quarterback David Lamie and Roscoe Coles for more offensive explosions.

Not only would that remove the Techmen from the risky seven-points winning margin zone, but it would allow breathing room for the defensive corps which gave its finest performance by far in toppling W&M last week — four pass interceptions, four fumble recoveries.

Therefore, if form prevails, Virginia Tech's predicted three TD decision will be translated into its 30th victory in the series, and Virginia's losing string should be extended to eight in a row — unless history intercedes, to make it close, anyway.