Spiders Prepared To Aid Challenge: ‘What Are VPI’s Gridders Made Of?’

By CHARLES KARMOSSY
Daily Press Sports Editor

Sorely distraught by a 1-3-1 record and an almost unwanted 14-14 tie against arch-rival Virginia last Saturday, Virginia Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe was asked earlier in the week:

“Do you plan to do about it?”

Still pained by his team’s continuing mistake-prone play and inconsistency on offense, Sharpe tartly replied:

“It ain’t no time to be shy and timid. I’m just going to challenge our squad and see if its got what it takes” to shake its slumping ways.

A most obliging foe, University of Richmond, stands ready to give Sharpe a helping hand in putting the challenge to his Gobblers, but the host Spiders (1:30 p.m.) are harboring ulterior motives.

This season has been no bed of roses for the Spiders either. Their ledger reads out as a lacklustre 1-5, but they remember having thrashed the Gobblers last year by 16-0, and Tech’s appearance in City Stadium is probably one of their last two or three chances for another victory in 1977.

With teams like Georgia and Maryland yet to face, Richmond’s other hopes for triumphs trace to dates with Furman (Nov. 5) and William and Mary (Nov. 19).

The victory outlook for the Techmen isn’t much brighter, not with Saturday’s game being followed by jousts with nationally-ranked Kentucky, Florida State (5-1), West Virginia, Wake Forest and ages-old rival VMI.

However, the invading Gobblers are favored by about 12 points, and that’s traceable to their having shown potential for a balanced offense while the Spiders have had difficulty getting untracked. Richmond has scored only 49 points in six games while yielding an average 31 per game.

Although the memory of the 14-14 standoff with UVA is nigh-unbearable to Sharpe and his squad, yet in achieving that they put 11 points on the scoreboard in the final 10 minutes 32 seconds in a good display of air-ground power.

Particularly effective was Tech’s offensive deployment featuring two wide receivers, and there’s probably little doubt that Sharpe will give orders to quarterback David Lamie to go the same route — and much earlier in the action.

During its lone but important touchdown drive of 70 yards in that game, Tech also demonstrated that it has a good stable of receivers for Lamie to hit.

Lamie connected on 5 or 7 throws and the completions were to fullback Dickie Holway for nine yards, Kenny Lewis (6), Wayne Zollicoffer (13), Holway again (7) and wide receiver Ellis Savage (17).

In between, of course, hobbled but still fleet halfback Roscoe Coles scampered for 12 yards and finally punched over for the TD from a yard out. That boosted his career total yardage to 3,131 — good for 33rd on the national list of all-time great ground-gainers.

Meantime, Richmond had one of its best games offensively against East Carolina, but the Spiders will face a tartar Tech defense that has been schooled against the likes of Texas A&M, Memphis State, Clemson and William and Mary.

While defenses of these two old rivals will play heavy roles, the key to the outcome may be in performances of the quarterbacks, Lamie for the Gobblers and probably Jeff Smith for the Spiders.

Neither is any great shakes in the running department, with Lamie gaining 164 yards on 66 carries to Smith’s 9 for 31. In the air, Lamie has hit on 22 of 45 tries for 313 yards (no touchdowns), while Smith is 11 of 28 for 85.