Gobblers' Razzano Wows Kentuckians

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The defense, insists Rick Anthony Razzano, "is not what's wrong with Virginia Tech."

Razzano is the one-time standout high school fullback from New Castle, Pa., who was "too small and too slow", to play college football at places like Penn State and Pittsburgh.

He is the same fellow who, even prior to this Fall, had already stacked up more tackling points than any other player in Tech history. Nevertheless, the pros have laid the same stigma on him — "too small, too slow."

There are a still-growing number of college teams that won't agree. Kentucky is the latest. The Gobblers lost 32-0, to be sure, but it was a game in which, Razzano asserts, "they weren't 32 points better."

The 5-foot-11 and 225-pounder most certainly did his share. It was, he feels, "my best game at Tech."

Statistically, the effort was unreal. With the defense playing on the field 45 minutes, Razzano was credited with 20 primary tackles and 10 assists.

Until this year, in three seasons, he had not missed a game. Injuries forced him out of two this Fall as the Gobblers have struggled through only one victory and a tie in seven starts.

The defense, insists Razzano, "is as good as we've had since I've been here." Indeed, he maintains "I'll put the season-long defense against any in the country."

Understandably, he points out that "we've been playing too long." Certainly 45 minutes (as against Kentucky) is more than any one unit can be expected to perform and remain up to par.

He also points out that "no one has driven 70 yards or so on us all year."

Against the Wildcats, seventh-ranked nationally, "we began to show the right attitude. In the first quarter we found we could stop them. At halftime I knew we could play with them."

It is no surprise to hear Razzano

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claim that he expects a similar defensive performance this week Saturday when Tech hosts 15th-ranked Florida State (6-1) in a 1:30 p.m. showing.

Basically, he attributes youth, injuries and mistakes to the Gobblers' plight. To be sure, only four other seniors have starting berths on the Gobblers' roster.

Still, says Razzano, "you have to have enthusiasm. Our big problem has been that mistakes have come at crucial times. Then people put their heads down. A good team doesn't put its head down when it makes mistakes."

To his credit, Razzano says "I don't want to put all the blame on the offense."

Still, that virtually uncontainable pride in the defense keeps cropping up. "The defense played well enough to have won every game this year," he says.

It is his feeling that the combination of the young team and the injuries "lead up to mistakes."

Indeed, he claims "we beat ourselves in every game but Clemson, and that includes Kentucky."

One item that does please Razzano is that this week, Tech returns to the Wishbone formation. "That's good. The players know it and feel more comfortable with it."

The decision also means that Davie Lamie is healthy again and probably will return as starting quarterback.