Tech ‘Made It Easy’ for Kentucky!

By JACK BOGACZYK
Sports Writer
LEXINGTON, Ky. — For Virginia Tech, the "I" didn’t have it here Saturday night. The Hokies, switching to the formation after three-and-a-half years in the wishbone under Coach Jimmy Sharpe, got the same poor offensive results as they were having before the switch.

Tech managed just 124 yards total offense against a big and quick Kentucky defense and the Wildcats sent a Commonwealth Stadium crowd capacity of 57,914 home satisfied with a 33-0 rout of the Hokies.

"No doubt about it," answered Sharpe, when asked if the Wildcats’ six straight wins was the most-dominated the Hokies have been since his arrival at Blacksburg in 1974. "They might be the No. 1 team in the country, but we made it easy for ‘em."

After Tech went to the dressing room at halftime trailing just 10-6 despite a poor offensive showing of its first two downs and 30 total yards, Kentucky assured its seventh win in eight starts with three touchdowns in the first 11:09 of the third period.

In the first three quarters against the Wildcats’ first-team defense, the Hokies had a woeful 58 yards total offense. And, as happened in last week’s 17-14 loss at Richmond, the Tech defense got little chance to shine.

Kentucky, which entered the game ranked seventh in the nation, scored its three third-period touchdowns and a school record-tying 53-yard field goal by Joe Bryant by taking over four times in Tech territory.

The Wildcats started on the Hokies’ 40, 21, 16 and 40 on four straight possessions—the latter three coming after turnovers.

Meanwhile, Tech’s offense continued to sputter. Sharpe tried three quarterbacks without success, while UK signalcaller Derrick Ramsey accounted for 187 of his team’s 472 yards total offense and rushed for two touchdowns after throwing to Felix Wilson for a first-half score.

Don LaRue started for Tech at quarterback, replacing usual first-stringer Dave Lamie, who has a sprained hand. But LaRue departed after two series, giving way to Mike Zouzalik. Finally, Sharpe went to Lamie—who had practiced little this week—in the final quarter.

Kentucky, which had only nine turnovers in its first seven games, suffered four interceptions and lost two fumbles. But the Wildcats’ defense, spearheaded by 6-7, 240-pound Art Still, sent Tech home with a 1-5-1 record.

"Our defense played superbly, it hasn’t played well every game," said Kentucky Coach Fran Carr, "Our defense won this game. We made more turnovers, offensively, than any year. Their (the Hokies’) defense really outplayed our offense.

Kentucky played without sophomore running back Randy Brooks, the team’s leading rusher. But Carr used four rushers in the first half to pick up 116 yards on the ground. Meanwhile, the Wildcats’ defense held Tech running ace Bruce Cole—playing the tailback spot in the "T"—to 59 yards in 26 carries.

"Obviously, it wasn’t very . . . " said Sharpe, stopping short as he described the Hokies’ formation, which became the team’s offense six days ago. "If we eliminate the mistakes, maybe . . . I just don’t know.

"In the third quarter, I wished we had worked on it (the wishbone) more in practice this week," Sharpe continued when asked if he considered switching back to the Hokies’ familiar set during the game. "But it’s not the formation, it’s bloating and tackling.

At halftime, it was 10-6 and we still felt we were in the game. We had a chance.

Kentucky made four first-half mistakes to help the Hokies stay close.

The Wildcats reached the scoreboard for the first time on Joe Bryant’s 27-yard field goal on the final play of the first period. Kentucky’s first-half touchdown—on the 43-yard scoring pass from Ramsey to Wilson—was set up by Mike Siganos’ 55-yard return on a 63-yard field goal attempt by Tech’s Paul Eagle that fell short.

The Hokies managed just 30 yards total offense in the first half compared to 218 for the home team. Tech got 26 yards on the first drive of the second period, going from its own 27 to the UK 44 before Eagle’s short field goal try.

It was on that drive that the Hokies had their other two first downs of the opening 20 minutes.

Kentucky ran four first-half plays to 29 for the visitors, and Tech’s best offensive weapon was punter George Roberts. The senior from Lynchburg booted six times for a 45.7 average.

Ramsey, Kentucky’s 6-5 quarterback about whom Coach Fran Carr once said, "He’ll never play quarterback again," threw three passes to Tech defenders in the opening half. That one interception more than he’d thrown all season. But the Wildcats could get no closer to scoring than the Wildcats’ eight.

That came on Tech’s last possession of the half, as centerback Gene Bunn picked off a Ramsey pass at the Kentucky 27 and returned it 18 yards. Fullback Dickie Holloway carried for one yard, but Zouzalik then threw an incompletion before being sacked at the UK 15.

Eagle tried a 33-yard field goal with 16 seconds left before intermission, but Kentucky’s defense held again as Ritchie Prince charged from the left to deflect the kick.

But after having more giveaways than a grand opening in the first half, the Wildcats came out changed team in the third quarter.

"We felt real confident at halftime," said Tech senior linebacker Dick Razano, who had 18 tackles and three assists. "They were lucky to get the TD they had, and without it, it would have been only 5-0. It was just a matter that we (Tech’s defenders) were on the field too much."

"It was another long, long night," moaned Sharpe. "And that’s nothing new. A spattering of offense . . . we’ve got to find a winning combination.

Obviously, a new offense was not the answer.

Virginia Tech

1800 Rivers Ave., Blacksburg, Va. 24060

(540) 231-5777

Box 1370

The Tech Repere

205 South Main St.

Roanoke, Va. 24011

Phone: (703) 855-2500

THE TECHER

1001 Main St.

Blacksburg, Va. 24060

Phone: (540) 231-5777

SPORTS

Roanoke Times & World-News

Sunday, October 30, 1977

Section C