VPI’s Newest Hopes Tied To Big Pass Play

By CHARLES KARMOSKY
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The “quarterback sweepstakes” ought to be in vogue for the next several days before Virginia Tech embarks Friday for another of its “important run-around” games against West Virginia at Morgantown.

Although the Gobblers lost to Florida State (23-21) this past weekend, Coach Jimmy Sharpe unveiled a fullback seemingly capable of providing the long lost consistency for his team’s running attack, but from that emerges a much larger question.

Good overland offenses are supposed to open up fuller exploitation of the team’s passing attack, so when Mickey Fitzgerald performed brilliantly against FSU, it was also glaringly evident that the Gobblers couldn’t capitalize on the aerial opportunities presented.

Despite going the route at quarterback, Davis Lamie couldn’t launch the big pass play, hitting only once in nine tries. His starting status is now extremely doubtful, because Sharpe declares, “I don’t know who’ll start at quarterback.”

As of midafternoon Monday, Sharpe wasn’t immediately shelving Lamie, but neither was he ready to name either Don LaRue or Mike Zouzalik — or even anyone else.

What he would divulge is that, “since our team seems finally to be coming together,” the Gobblers are going back to three-four basic offensive plays and try to perfect them — and, of course, put extra emphasis on “the big play.”

Without that big aerial weapon, Sharpe is aware that West Virginia could concentrate on “shutting down Fitzgerald,” in which case the aerial tactics once more might easily deteriorate into liabilities rather than assets.

Sharpe is also cognizant of something else “mighty good” which could develop if Tech can find the right combination of passing and Fitzgerald’s running. That’s the greater opportunity for “more running room” opening up to Roscoe Coles, who all season has been the victim of opponents ganging up on him due to lack of pass-run balance.

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Quite naturally, Sharpe expects to come up with some good solutions for what ails his team’s offense, but he’s quick to point out that he’ll need all the ammunition he can get for the shootout against the Mountaineers.

Inconceivable as it may be, the Mountaineers may be angrier than the Gobblers about their current status in the college world of football, though they own a 4-4 mark while Tech hungering at 1-6-1.

The “big rub” to WVU is that it started out so promisingly but has fallen on hard times.

After winning their first four, including a whopping upset of Maryland, the Mountaineers now have lost as many. Starting with the Boston College game, which was lost by 28-24 by yielding 10 points in the last seven minutes of play, they have bowed successively to Penn State, Villanova and Pittsburgh.

Having been humiliated by the archival Panthers this weekend, 33-3, WVU Coach Frank Cignetti will be looking to a rejuvenation of his offense just as much as Sharpe and the Gobblers, notably in the passing department where quarterback Dan Kendra was blanked by Pitt without a touchdown.

However, the Mountaineers have flashed far more scoring potential than the Gobblers, both via ground and air tactics, so fanciers of high-scoring contests ought to get a bargain for their money.

Since Tech’s defense generally has done itself proud while WVU’s mostly has been porous, the outlook is for a wide-open game for obvious reasons.