V.P.I. 'TANK'
Fitzgerald
Problem
For VMI

By ED RICHARDS
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How to stop a "runaway tank" is a problem Virginia Military Institute will have to literally tackle this Saturday.

The powerful force will be coming out of the Virginia Tech backfield in the person of 6-foot-2 and 250-pound fullback Mickey Fitzgerald.

He has crashed through enemy defenses for over a 100 yards a game the last three weeks, and is coming off a 142-yard performance against Wake Forest.

"Fitzgerald's a real plus to their offense. You can't miss seeing him - not at 250 pounds," says VMI Coach Bob Thalman. "We haven't run against backs any bigger than him."

The Keydets, however, feel they'll be able to come up with some sort of tank trap. They take pride in their rushing defense, which has grudgingly surrendered a meager 108.4 yards a game.

Thalman knows there could be problems, especially since Virginia Tech appeared to find its offense in last Saturday's 28-10 verdict over the Deacons. The Gobblers struck for 319 yards overland and 135 through the air.

"They just got the job done in all areas on offense," points out the VMI skipper.

Last year, the Techmen buried the Lexington outfit 37-7 with their running game in Richmond's Tobacco Bowl. The victors never went to the air, but they didn't have to with 372 yards rushing.

Though the Gobblers are an unimpressive 2-7-1, the Keydets are prepared for an all-out war.

"We know the type of football players they have and we can't go by their record," insists Thalman. "We'd feel the same about them whether they're 9-1 or 1-9. They've been in a lot of close games and we recognize that."

Four of Tech's losses have been by fewer than seven points - 21-20 to Memphis State, 17-14 to Richmond, 23-21 to nationally-ranked Florida State and 20-14 to West Virginia.

The Keydets may be at their best physically in several weeks. Almost everyone is over the flu "bug" that ran rampant in camp last week.

Two defensive backs may also be back in the fold in the injury-riddled secondary, Robby Jones and Walt Bellamy.

Kecoughtan graduate Johnny Garnett was recalled from the offense for duty in the secondary last week. See Robby, Page 58, Column 2