Sharpe's Job On Shaky Ground Going Into Finale With Keydets

By ED RICHARDS
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A loss by Virginia Tech Saturday against Virginia Military Institute could mean the end of the line for Gobblers' Head Coach Jimmy Sharpe. Sharpe's job seemed safe two weeks ago, despite an alleged drinking "problem" he had before the season began and a disappointing record on the football field.

Now his job appears on shaky ground following the death of freshman fullback Bob Vorhies Monday night. The 18-year-old Vorhies suffered an apparent heart attack several hours after running "punishment laps" at football practice.

More than a few people were obviously upset that Sharpe failed to reveal the fact about the laps in an initial statement.

Instead, he had commented: "We had a light but very fine practice (Monday) and Bob seemed among the happiest on the squad."

Deputy State Medical Examiner Dr. David Oxley said Tuesday following an autopsy that he didn't think the laps had anything to do with Vorhies' death.

It has been a long season of troubles for the Gobblers, but, ironically, they appeared to have turned things around three weeks ago.

At that time, they came close to upsetting nationally-ranked Florida State before falling 23-21. Two weeks ago they also took West Virginia to the wire before bowing 20-14, then looked impressive in last Saturday's 28-10 triumph over Wake Forest.

A convincing victory over the Keydets, already crowned the Big Five champions, could help save some face for the 2-7-1 Techmen.

Offensively, the Gobblers hope to duplicate last week's production, which included 319 yards rushing and 454 yards in total offense.

That was the No. 1 showing this year for the offense, obviously brought to life by the emergence of sophomore fullback Mickey Fitzgerald.

Junior quarterback David Lamie enjoyed a career high in total offense against the Deacons, passing for 135 yards and scampering for 58 more on the ground.

Among those responsible for opening up daylight were junior guard Leonard Walker, a standout from Petersburg, and Tory Smith, a junior center, from Richmond.

Tech's defense also should have renewed confidence after holding Wake Forest to a paltry 99 yards rushing.

The man they'll definitely have to keep their eyes on this week is elusive and swift VMI tailback Andre Gibson. He has already rushed for 1,162 yards, a Keydet single-season record, and scored seven touchdowns.

The Gobblers know they'll also have to put the heat on junior quarterback Robby Clark, who has developed a hot hand passing in recent weeks.

After a slow start, the Pocahontas High graduate has hiked his throwing percentage to 51.1, with 50 completions on 96 attempts for 813 yards and five touchdowns.

The loss of fumbles is one of the most glaring statistic when trying to trace the reasons for the Gobblers' misfortunes this year.