Tech's special teams play making a big difference

By Dave Johnson

Watching the video, Dave Johnson says, "Scott has to feel... something. Maybe not fear, but certainly respect. And awe. And maybe some fear. It's hard to think about it." Scared, Virginia's junior punter, has never seen anything like this. Tech's punt-block team, which calls itself "The Pride of the Tribe," has an incredible 85% success rate and 100% efficiency.

"They've blocked 10 of 12... they've blocked three of three..." In Frank Beamer's 12 seasons as Tech's head coach, his special teams have accounted for 17 touchdowns. Eleven have come on blocked punts.

"If you look at their statistics, it's amazing how many punts and kicks they block. We've heard stories where they've blocked a punt when a player was marked man when Tech plays, but to Virginia, it's a different story. They're just better. At least in our view."

Almost every time an out of bounds by Tech was recorded, Virginia's punter was flagged for either holding or illegal. And when Tech scored a touchdown on a blocked punt against Alabama-Birmingham, the team set a new school record for special teams points in a game.

The end zone for a 14-0 lead — which Tech couldn't hold. Kent Carper's blocked punt in Boston College territory led to a touchdown that put the Hokies ahead 14-0.

Tech scored a touchdown on a blocked punt, and another set up a field goal attempt.

Special

Continued from B1

You've probably heard the story about Virginia's off-track horse racing, where they've won every year since 1920. It's true.

"They gave blocking schemes trouble because they don't always do things very well," he said. "They disengage every time you block. They're on top of it all the time. They block everybody. They block all the time. They block like a dog."

Virginia's senior tailback, who has never seen anything like this, said, "They've blocked 10 of 12... they've blocked three of three..." In Frank Beamer's 12 seasons as Tech's head coach, his special teams have accounted for 17 touchdowns. Eleven have come on blocked punts.

"If you look at their statistics, it's amazing how many punts and kicks they block. We've heard stories where they've blocked a punt when a player was marked man when Tech plays, but to Virginia, it's a different story. They're just better. At least in our view."

Almost every time an out of bounds by Tech was recorded, Virginia's punter was flagged for either holding or illegal. And when Tech scored a touchdown on a blocked punt against Alabama-Birmingham, the team set a new school record for special teams points in a game.

The end zone for a 14-0 lead — which Tech couldn't hold. Kent Carper's blocked punt in Boston College territory led to a touchdown that put the Hokies ahead 14-0.

Tech scored a touchdown on a blocked punt, and another set up a field goal attempt.

The key to success this year has been taking one game at a time. Dave Fairbank's Division I-AA Notebook, B5

Pittsburgh. All told, the Hokies' blocked punts this season have resulted, either directly or indirectly, in 13 points. So what sets Tech apart? Why do the Hokies have the most feared kick and punt blockers in the country? Maybe it has something to do with Beamer, who oversees the special teams himself. Most coaches — Virginia's George Welsh included — shucked it off to their assistants.

"Tech has the right idea," Welsh said. "They're obviously doing something right. They're as good as anybody."

For another, Beamer doesn't buy the theory that you don't want to "waste" your better players or risk injury by pushing them on special teams. Hitt, the team's leading receiver, has recovered two blocked punts for touchdowns. Carper, a pro prospect at safety, has blocked five punts in his career. Seven players have blocked at least one kick or punt this season.

And there's the confusion factor. Tech's punt-block team lines up one way this time, a different way the next. And still another way the next. You never know where they're coming from, or if they're actually coming. Although you should probably assume that Scott, who has had a couple of punt

Photos see Special B3