No upset this week for Tech

By Gary Crockett
The News & Advance

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Virginia Tech came to Alabama looking to put somebody across its knee. The Hokies came to the right place.

No. 23 Tech, coming off an embarrassing loss to Temple, limited Alabama to 94 total yards and Jarrett Ferguson (Stanford 6-1, River) rushed for two touchdowns as the Hokies rebounded 41-0 Saturday before 31,997 at Legion Field.

Tech’s defense was back to its old form, preventing the Blazers from crossing midfield with a dominating performance reminiscent of its showing in last year’s 37-0 win over UAB.

“We just wanted to make a statement, that we’re still Virginia Tech,” said Larry Austin, who blocked a punt that resulted in a key touchdown just before halftime.

Lamont Pughes rushed for 127 yards, giving him over 100 yards for three straight games, while the Hokies became the first Tech team since 1983 to record two shutouts in a season.

Last year, Tech held the Blazers to 14 yards rushing and 66 yards total, and on Saturday allowed UAB to advance as far as the 50 — a fourth-quarter drive that went backwards after UAB fell short on its 11th third-down attempt of the game.

“It meant a whole lot to us to get back out there and play up to our potential,” said defensive tackle Carl Bradley (E.C.Glass). “What counted was how high we bounced back from that loss.”

The win improved the Hokies to 6-1, making them eligible for a sixth straight bowl. It also provides the team a lift heading into this weekend’s showdown with West Virginia, a 34-31 loser to Miami on Sunday.

“We needed to feel better about ourselves,” Tech coach Frank Beamer said. “We approached this game in a very serious fashion, and I thought our players played very serious.

“I think to be 6-1 at this point with this football team, regardless of who the wins have been against, really says a lot of good things about our players. I don’t think many people thought we’d be a 6-1 football team at the beginning of the year.

Tech, which had 312 yards rushing last year against UAB, ground out 289 more Saturday en route to a 24-0 halftime lead and a season-high for points.

Nick Swacha started at quarterback.

Please see TECH, Page D-8.

Ferguson, who scored his first career touchdown off a screen pass against Temple, added his second score of the game with a six-yard burst for a 17-0 Hokies advantage with 11:22 to go in the half.

Ferguson’s two touchdowns capped mini-scoring drives of 28 and 46 yards as Tech enjoyed its second-largest halftime edge of the season. It led Clemson 34-0 at the break.

Tech 44, UAB 0

BIRMINGHAM 0, UAB 0

TEAM 25 20 15 14 61 41 44 3 3 4

Tech 11 13 13 17 61 34 44 3 3 4

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Frank Beamer
Tech coach

“The whole game the punter was getting the ball off slow,” Austin said. “When we were up (at the line), they were punting. When they snapped the ball, I just came free and laid out for it.”

Before Austin’s game-turning play, the Hokies used good field position and the running of Pughes and Ferguson to gain the upper hand. Pughes had 88 yards the first two quarters, half on a 44-yard run.

Ferguson, who entered the game with 55 yards rushing on 18 carries, scored on a 23-yard run, his longest of the season, to give the Hokies a 10-0 lead with 18 seconds left in the opening quarter.

“I figured it would come along sooner or later,” said Ferguson, who was named team player of the game.

Frank Beamer: The guy who probably ran as well as anybody was Jarrett Ferguson.

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