Virginia Tech Gobblers Are Ready For Wake Forest Challenge Saturday

By Chuck Burress

Shrewdly, the Demon Deacons of Wake Forest University--the Virginia Tech football team to "come through the pass." From all indications, an ambush is awaiting the Hokies at Groves Stadium on Saturday night.

Wake Forest Coach Chuck Mills left the distinct impression in Blacksburg last November that the Hokies had embarrassed his Deacons in a game which Tech won, 40-10.

Mills thought that perhaps Tech had intentionally run up the score as a means of impressing officials on the Tangerine Bowl selection committee.

With the score 34-10 in the Gobblers' favor, Tech was still passing the football and drawing personal foul penalties. They scored their final TD with 22 seconds on the clock, but in doing so provided enough incentive to have the Deacons pointing toward a rematch in the 1976 season opener.

It was a battered Wake Forest team that lost to the Gobblers in Blacksburg last November.

Wake finished the season with only three wins and eight losses. The wins were big ones--all ACC triumphs--but they left the Deacons ravaged with injuries.

It is significant that Wake defeated North Carolina State, 30-22, and North Carolina, 21-9.

This is proof that Deacon football may be coming of age under the direction of Coach Mills. A healthy Wake Forest squad will be no pushover for the Hokies.

The meeting between Tech and Wake on Saturday night has an added incentive for both sides.

Wake apparently believes it has something to prove, but so do the Gobblers.

Tech has suffered through a nine-year opening gam drought. Not since 1967 have the Hokies captured a win in an opening game.

Saturday's contest will be the 24th meeting between the two teams in a series that began in 1916. Tech has won 14 of the games, lost eight and tied one. During their last visit to Winston-Salem, the Techmen won handily, 44-9.

Many of last year's stars will return at Wake this season. The standouts among the 17 returning starters are halfback John Zaglinski and free safety Bill Armstrong.

The Gobblers have 37 lettermen back, 18 of them starters. All-America candidates Tom Beasley, Rondal Davis and Roscoe Coles are expected to lead the way for the Hokies, whose hopes are running high for duplicating the success they found in 1975.

If the productive practice sessions of the past three weeks are any indication, Tech is ready for what's ahead. Even an ambush.