Tech Passes The Test

By JERRY RATCLIFFE
Senior Sports Editor
WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.—"We passed the first test," said Virginia Tech football coach Jimmy Sharpe Saturday night after watching his Gobblers dismantle a well-respected Wake Forest team.

"There's things we gotta correct, but the only mistakes we made were correctable ones," said the Hokie chief who breathed a sigh of relief after Tech broke an eight-year losing streak of opening games. The Hokies used an aggressive defense and what Sharpe termed "a modified wishbone" in nearly shutting out the Atlantic Coast Conference Deacons in the Saturday night opener in Groves Stadium.

Employing a double wing set from the wishbone, with both running backs splitting out to the corners of the offensive line, Tech rolled up 274 yards on the ground in winning their first opening game since 1967. "I don't know if the double wing affected them that much, but in the third quarter we began to open it up a little with draws to Coles. We'll get it polished enough to help us," noted the Gobbler chief.

Sharpe revealed that Tech didn't unveil its entire repertoire in the new offense, obviously waiting to spring the new look even further against next week's opponents, nationally ranked Texas A&M.

Tech didn't get high as many people would expect. "We kept the whole pre-game atmosphere low-key," said the coach. "The players were confident. They knew what they had to do and went about it in sort of business-like manner. We just lined up and challenged 'em in the second half.

Tech guessed right about Wake's pre-game plan of using tailback John Zeglni. But the Deacons strategy, ran into a snowballing Tech defense that yielded only two first downs rushing on the night.

Coles was tough for the Hokies with 14 rushes for 68 yards. "Roscoe didn't get too many opportunities," said Sharpe, of his star junior running back who gained over 1,000 yards in the ground last season. Coles was taken out of the game late when he got a helmet on the thigh giving him a bad bruise. "We don't know how serious it is until we get home and take a good look at it," pointed out the coach.

It is believed though that Coles' injury would not hamper him from playing against the Aggies Saturday.

Sharpe was proud of his entire defense. "Especially the secondary."

"It was a helluva defensive effort," said the Hokie boss after congratulating nearly every Tech player in the locker room.

Tech corrected its adjustments at halftime to Wake's slanting defense and began to challenge the Deacons in belly-to-belly football. "We lined up and ran right at 'em," noted Sharpe.

Tech turned over the offense to quarterback Mitchel Barnes in the second half, and the mustached senior responded by efficiently driving the Gobblers for good yardage.