Tech Now Vows To Finish at 10-1

By DOUG DOUGHTY
Sports Writer

COLLEGE STATION, Tex. — There was very little that Buddy Bennett—or anybody else—could have said to Rick Razzano to take away the sting of Virginia Tech’s defeat at the hands of 12th-ranked Texas A&M Saturday.

After Razzano had crossed the field to congratulate the victorious Aggies, he found Bennett waiting for him at the entrance to the losers’ locker room. Bennett, a 38-year-old veteran of college football’s wars, offered his hand and then whispered, in a consoling voice, “Just you see. This’ll help us down the road.”

While there is nothing the Hokies can do to erase the loss from their record, there was little question that a setback by a team of Texas A&M’s caliber can benefit the Hokies in the future.

“I can tell you this much,” said Razzano before the electricity went off in the Tech locker room, cutting short his post-game interview. “There’s no doubt in my mind that this team is going to go 10-1.”

According to the Hokies’ middle linebacker, who made 14 unassisted tackles to share game defensive honors with the Aggies’ Jimmy Dean and Robert Jackson, the game could not have come at a better time.

“We were coming off a win against Wake Forest. We had some momentum. We thought we were playing well. The whole team, myself included, was really confident that we were going to win the game.”

Not only did Razzano distinguish itself, but the Hokie defense was every bit as effective as the Aggies’ for most of the game. George Woodard, Texas A&M’s punishing fullback, did pick up 111 yards, but he did not really break loose, except twice on a 37-yard burst off tackle on the third play of the game and a 43-yard score on pass from David Shipman that set up the Aggies’ first touchdown in the second quarter.

“Still, it was obvious what he was doing for them,” acknowledged Razzano. “He didn’t reel off many long gains, but he picked up four or five yards a crack and helped key their offense.”

Twice during the Aggies’ first touchdown drive, the Hokies keyed on Woodard, only to have quarterback Shipman pick up important yardage after faking to the big fullback.

“He made their offense go,” admitted Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe. “We were able to shut down their option until late in the game, but their ability to give the ball to Woodard opened up the passing lanes.”

While the Aggies were unable to capitalize on the long bomb, although second stringer David Walker underthrew receiver Randall Tate on a sure touchdown pass in the third quarter, it was the short screen with which the Hokies’ defense was unable to cope.

“We knew they might pass a whole lot. Our problem was that we just didn’t react to it,” Razzano commented. “The effectiveness of that play depends totally on how the defense reacts, especially in how quickly it gets to the receiver after he catches the ball.”

Razzano admitted there was a challenge to being on the same field as the defense that was No. 1 in the country last year, but he was really didn’t get a chance to watch the techniques of Dean and Edgar Fields, two A&M tackles that Sharpe called “all-Americans.”

“I was pretty exhausted after the first half,” he admitted. “I was out on the field so much that when I came off, all I wanted to do was relax. Still, what little I saw of them, they looked pretty tough.”

Indeed, the sentiment among the Hokies was that A&M is highly underrated if the Aggies are the 12th best team in the country in one poll (Sports Illustrated), 14th in another (Associated Press) and as low as 19th in a third (UPI).

“All I know,” said Razzano, “is that if there are 11 better teams in the country, I’d like to see them.”

See them, maybe, but not play them. The Hokies have tangled with enough powerhouse for a while.