Sharpe Won’t Change
Attack Against Eagles

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Virginia Tech flunked its first tough defensive test last Saturday in Texas.
The Hokies didn’t exactly show proud colors offensively -- in fact, they scored a heavy zero.
With those two remnants hanging over Virginia Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe you might expect to see a different game plan this week. But don’t count on it.

“We’ll continue to do exactly as we’ve been doing,” said the coach yesterday. “We’re going to continue our wishbone offense. We’re going to attack folks up front like I know we’re capable of doing.”

This Saturday at Lane Stadium the Hokies will be hitting the middle of Southern Mississippi University’s line. Last week the Golden Eagles were stung 42-0 by an unexpected East Carolina University rampage.

“I was totally shocked with their game last week,” said Sharpe. “They were expected to have a real fine football team. Last year they had a defense ranked in the top ten nationally and they have most of that back.”

Southern Miss has another plus going for them coming into this contest. When the Golden Eagles blow onto the Lane field they’ll be under the direction of a Radford native, quarterback Kenny Alderman who, as Sharpe puts it, “would like to show his folks a win.”

But the Tech coach isn’t too concerned with the Mississippi squad. His interest this week focuses on his own Hokies.

“I’m worrying about us,” explained the coach. “Our players were very discouraged so we’ve got to regroup and get it all together. We’re not going to panic. We’re not going to say we can’t move the football.”

What the Hokies are going to do in preparation for this game will be centered around the offensive line. Against A&M Hokie passing was non-existent because of backfield pressure.

“Everytime we got a pass called they’d pour everything in but the kitchen sink back there,” recalled Sharpe. “We’re going to scrimmage. We are going to go out there and move the football. I’m hoping we can get it done in an hour. But if we don’t we’ll stay out there all night.”

The big defensive responsibility in this week’s game will center on stopping the Golden Eagles’ running game. The Mississippi squad relies on halfback Ben Gary and flanker Boo Smith. Gary rushed for more than 900 yards last season and earned his nickname “Go-Go” for good reason. But Sharpe isn’t scrapping the strength of the Mississippi air game either.

“Well they showed they could throw the ball against ECU,” he explained. “We really don’t know what to expect. We got to realize they were embarrassed last week and at the same time we got to get our stuff together.”

Sharpe expects Eagle Coach Bobby Collins, a former Tech defensive backfield coach, to concentrate on the Hokies inside running game. Last week at A&M Tech backs were never thrown for a loss and the coach anticipates at least that much running success Saturday. But to get the ground yards the Tech offensive line must churn out more power.

“I was disappointed in them,” recalled Sharpe. “They weren’t able to hold the line of scrimmage. But they’ll work hard this week and we’ll do better.”

His Hokies will also find a boosting audience this week in their match. And it could be this minor detail that gauges, but not decides, the final outcome.

The score, of course, will be slugged out on the field. And this one could turn out a little closer than expected.