Tech Needs Leader:
Adams a Candidate

By Mike Bevans

Virginia Tech’s second play from scrimmage last Saturday at Texas A&M had quarterback Mitchell Barnes overthrowing wide receiver Moses Foster. A perfect pass might have resulted in a 57-yard touchdown. Foster had the room and the angle to make it to the end zone and who knows what an early 7-0 lead on such an explosive play would have done for the Hokies.

As it turned out, Tech wound up with minus-10 yards to show for its first offensive series, 93 yards of total offense for the game and a 19-0 defeat when it was over. The Aggies made certain the Hokies never again had such a scoring opportunity.

“It hurt our pride that we got beat and the offense was disappointed that it didn’t score,” said Tech fullback Paul Adams of the Hokies first shutout in 67 games. “But we really don’t feel like we have to come back and prove anything.”

The Hokies’ had rolled up 350 yards in a 23-6, season-opening victory at Wake Forest the week previous, but Tech was going up against last year’s No. 1 defense in the nation at College Station.

THE AGGIES WERE a huge and physical band of veterans on defense and Adams was the lone Hokie ballcarrier able to contend, with the strength of A&M. He had 25 of Tech’s 27 first-half total yards and wound up with a team-high 50 yards on 10 carries.

Through two games, Adams has yet to be stopped before or at the line of scrimmage.

“I’d like to keep that up all year,” said Adams, a 6-0, 220-pound senior. “My size probably makes a difference and I am the biggest back on the team.

“We prepared hard for the game (with A&M) and we thought we could possibly pull off an upset. Size was a factor and we made some mistakes. If we played them again, we would handle the situation differently. We’d want what to expect and we’d do some things we didn’t do the first time.”

Adams’ 85 yards on 24 carries is tops for the Hokies after two games. He has been sharing the fullback spot in the Wishbone with 6-4, 200-pound senior George Heath, who has 71 yards on 17 carries.

Tech has yet to pull off a big play on offense, the likes of what a Barnes-to-Foster pass against A&M might have produced. Barnes and Foster hooked up for a 29-yard TD reception against Wake with Foster making a diving catch in the back of the end zone.

TECH OWNED A 13-0 lead at the time, however, and that score was late third quarter insurance. Heath’s 25-yard dash in the final minutes against A&M was the only big gainer of last week and it was far too little, far too late.

“Somebody’s going to have to pick up the team,” said Adams. “In the past, it’s taken three or four weeks for the offense to come around. We can’t afford that happening again.

“We’re going to have to come around this week.

“We had a good showing against Wake Forest, but I don’t feel like I’ve cut loose yet and a couple of other guys don’t either.”

The Hokies will play host to Southern Mississippi in their home opener Saturday at Lane Stadium. The Southerners were waxed, 48-0, last week at East Carolina. The Pirates rolled up 472 yards (416 rushing) and checked the Southerners on 173.

“We plan on coming back strong,” said Adams, “but this isn’t East Carolina against Southern Mississippi. This is us — Virginia Tech against Southern Mississippi. I remember them from my freshman year and they were real tough.

“We’re not looking at what somebody else did. They’ll be like us — a lot different than last week.”

SOMETHING DIFFERENT for Tech would be that rallying point — a big play to ignite the offense. Halfback Roscoe Coles, the most logical one to do it, had a 14-yarder against Wake and a seven-yarder against A&M as his longest gains this season.

“Basically,” explained Adams, “we need a team leader . . . somebody to step forward.”

What about Paul Adams? “I could pick the team up,” he answered. “A couple of times last year we needed a good run and I would break out for one. Maybe Saturday I can get things started coming around.

“I’ve been around a while. If I have to be, I could be the one.”