Gobblers Stop Stubborn Eagles

Fake Field Goal Lifts Hokies Past Southern

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A fake field goal resulting in a first down allowed Virginia Tech to retain possession of the ball and drive for a game-breaking touchdown early in the fourth quarter Saturday, with the Gobblers turning back surprisingly stubborn Southern Mississippi, 16-7.

With the Hokies ahead only 16-7, Tech sent in soccer-style placekicker Paul "Chile Beans" Engle for an apparent 52-yard field goal attempt with the wind behind him. But when the ball was snapped, holder quarterback Mitchell Barnes whirled and rifled a screen pass to fullback Paul Adams.

Adams, a controversial figure in the play, bulled six yards to the Southern Miss 26 for a key. The visiting Golden Eagle defense was unsuspecting, and more than one player noted after the game that the razzle-dazzle play broke the back of the Southern momentum, if not spirit.

Adams was the center of discussion between assistants in the press box and Sharpe on the sidelines, before the game-breaking play. The coaches didn’t want Sharpe to use Adams as the receiver, because he doesn’t have the greatest hands in the world.

But Sharpe overruled them, the play worked. "It might have alerted them if we had sent in another player," noted the Tech coach.

Tech then nickled and dimed Southern to death for the following eight plays of the 17-play drive. Adams gained another big first down on fourth and inches at the 15 moments before Barnes himself, stuck over for the commanding touchdown.

Tech’s Engle missed the extra point with 11:19 left in the game with the score the eventual outcome 16-7.

Southern came to play. After being miffed 48-0 at East Carolina last week, the Eagles rode into Lane Stadium with upset the line of thought.

Tech’s slight 5-0 advantage at halftime was evidence of that. Southern was taken lightly by the Hokies until that time, confessed Sharpe. But for the third consecutive week, the third quarter was probably the turning point of the game for the Gobblers.

Tech took the opening kickoff at its own 27 and marched 73 yards in seven plays to increase the lead to 10-0.

Roscoe "Two, too" Coles broke free on a 37-yard scoring gallop, outracing the surprised Southern secondary to provide Tech with its first comfortable lead of the day. After fullback George Heath and Coles had rammed away on six carries covering 38 yards, Coles broke clear at the line of scrimmage on a fourth and two situation.

That drive in the third quarter forced Southern to adjust to the new reality of the game. They never recovered.

By 4:19, Tech had scored once again, 20-7. This time the Hokies went with the same approach, running for 132 of their 175 yards on the ground. Davis, who was held to 27 yards, found a gaping hole on the left side, breaking for 52 yards to the Southern 41.

Sharpe was the star of the Hokie attack, breaking for 141 yards on 14 carries. Davis was held to 27 on 10 carries. But he scored twice and connected with Sharpe for three touchdowns.

"They’re going to be tough to stop," said Southern Coach Jerry Stovall. "We’ve had our chances against Tech. But we have to find a way to stop them."

Sharpe, who has rushed for 164 yards and caught 10 passes for 137 yards, was named The Sun’s player of the game.

PHOTO CURTIS SHARPE OF VIRGINIA TECH BREAKS INTO THE END ZONE FOR ONE OF HIS THREE TOUCHDOWNS IN THE GAME AGAINST SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI SATURDAY. THE HOKIES WOULD WIN 20-7.