Fake Field Goal Lifts Tech

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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 10-7, 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 Mitcheal 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 28 for a key first down. The visiting Golden Eagle defense was unsuspecting, and when he scored, 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, snuck 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 3-0 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 first 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 36 yards, Coles broke clear at the line of scrimmage on a fourth and two situation.

"That drive in the third quarter was a big one," said Sharpe after the battle. "It got everyone excited on the sidelines, it got that adrenalin pumping."

Tech was not up for the game. The players admitted it and Sharpe echoed the thoughts. "We didn't have any emotional highs for this game. But we'll take it just like that."

"It was a game we had to have to start what we want for the rest of the season."

Many Hokie followers believe Tech can now go 10-1, with a bowl bid in the offing, after the loss to Texas A&M a week ago.

Southern began to open up a bit on its first possession of the second half, a trend it carried as much out of necessity as planning. But the drive was squelched when placekicker Randy McDonald's 55-yard field goal attempt was short.

The only good punt return of the day by Southern helped set up the Eagles' first and only touchdown of the season. Gobblers booter George Roberts, a walk-on who has earned a scholarship, kept the Eagles backed up all day with his booming punts which seemingly went as high as they did long.

But after booting a 44-yard punt which was negated because of offsetting penalties Roberts came back and punted another 44-yarder to the same spot.

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However, this time Southern's Malachi Henry returned the boot 22 yards to his own 44. Workhorse running back Ben Garry carried twice to the Tech 48 before breaking the game's longest run.

After taking the pitch from former Radford quarterback Kenny Alderman, Garry weaved through Tech's secondary on option and raced 48 yards for the TD, outmaneuvering Tech corner Gene Bunn, the last man that had a chance.

Tech rushed for 230 yards and passed for only 33 with Coles getting his first 100-yard day of the season with 121 yards on 20 rushes. Garry led all rushers for Southern with 143 on 19 attempts. Southern had 195 yards on the ground, and 94 more through the air.

Alderman completed 7-of-11 "It was a pretty damn good run," said Sharpe. "It was a well executed play, especially when he broke back against the grain."

Tech gained possession on its go ahead touchdown when linebacker Rick Razzano viciously tore the ball away from Garry at midfield.

Seventeen plays later Tech was inside.

Southern threatened mildly in the waning moments when Alderman used a combination of runs and short passes to move from the Southern 30 to Tech's 21 before Mike Fabrikner and Stuart Patterson sacked him for a seven-yard loss on fourth and nine.

Southern threatened three times in the first half, going ahead 6-3 with 3:58 left in the second period when the Eagles scored on a halfback pass. But the play was negated when offensive tackle Porter Mitchell was victimized as an illegal receiver downfield.

As a result, Southern was pushed back to the 35 from where it missed a 52-yard three-point attempt on fourth and 20. It was one of three attempts which were short.

Things could have been different if the Eagles had bypassed a chance for a quick three points on their first offensive series of the game.

Southern took the opening kickoff at its own 20 and marched to the Tech 3, but on fourth and two, defensive tackle Tom Beasley, playing injured, burst through and stopped tailback Chuck Clancy for no gain.

Tech, now 2-1, has an open date before hosting state rival William and Mary in two weeks.

Southern, 0-3, a team which hasn't played a home game during the past three years because a new stadium was under construction, faces the inevitable task of hosting Ole Miss next week.