THOUGHTS ON A WEEKEND

Time Has Changed Department — Larry Brown, sidelined by an ailing foot, didn’t see action against Seattle. The Redskins’ all-time leading rusher, who not too long ago could do nothing unnoticed, celebrated his 29th birthday Sunday in virtual isolation. Even the Redskins’ pre-game note sheet didn’t mention the milestone.

For those who concentrated on Virginia Tech and Washington, the college-pro twin bill provided a study in the ground game. Both teams were heavily favored and both coaches stressed concern over becoming upset victims. Both, too, showed reluctance to pass, but certainly Virginia Tech’s Jimmy Sharpe was the more conservative.

Tech threw only six times, completing four in the 21-7 conquest of Southern Mississippi. “We’ll get better,” insisted Sharpe. “We took only four plays into the game. I was concerned over our mental frame of mind. The boys did not appear to be very emotional.”

Former Tech Assistant Bobby Collins, the Southern Miss head coach now, concedes Virginia-bred quarterback Ken Alderman is “throwing better than we thought he could.” He was 7-for-11 with 94 yards against Tech. Collins, too, hesitated about throwing, especially late in the game when his Golden Eagles trailed. “We just wanted six points at a time without gambling,” he said.

Seattle Assistant Coach Larry Pecciotti offers a nifty observation about coaching an expansion club. “It’s like raising kids,” the native New Jerseyan says. “Sometimes they give you good moments and sometimes bad ones.”

In one year and two games, Washington’s brilliant runner Mike Thomas has acquired four game balls. Among other things, he’s still trying to prove he’s the “best” of the three Thomas brothers to have played in the pro ranks. The other National Football Leaguer in the family is St. Louis receiver Earl, but Jimmy left after 1975 to take an assistant coaching job in college ranks.

Virginia Tech’s ground game didn’t roll that easily. One reason, says Newport Newsian Ed Nuttycombe, the Gobblers’ blocking back, “is that they were stepping out their defensive tackles and forcing the play with their linebackers. I adjusted by taking the tackles out wide, instead of going out and cutting in to get the linebackers as I usually do.”

Seattle came into Washington with the reputation of being a fourth-quarter team. It was one of the major reasons Joe Theismann never got in to relieve Billy Kilmer at quarterback. “I was planning on using Joe, but then when they scored I changed my mind,” George Allen said of the 21-7 victory. Actually, virtually all the second-stringers had appeared on the special units.

Tech’s victory wasn’t overwhelming, but coupled with William and Mary’s 14-0 upset of Virginia, it emerged as food for thought. Although the Gobblers and Indians have hooked up in good duels in the past, their battle Oct. 2 marks the first time in many years that the Tribe invades Blacksburg (at least at this juncture) figuring to have more than just emotion going for it.

One reason for the near-equality — barring, of course, a rash of W&M injuries against East Carolina this Saturday — was predicted by Tribe leader Jim Root nearly two years ago. As soon as the administration approved commitment to an improved program and the NCAA blessed the 30-scholarship limit, Root insisted “you’ll see a balance of power all over the country. Unbeaten seasons will get rarer and rarer.”

One interesting substitution at Washington Sunday had Gerard Williams taking over in the late going at left cornerback for Pat Fischer. Fischer wasn’t supposed to be nursing an injury or the flu bug, which had leveled several Redskins, including linebacker Chris Hanburger, who had 106-degree fever Saturday.