Sharpe Not Fretting Over Offense, Looks At ‘Newer’ Runners

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It’s nothing new. Over the past quarter-century, defense usually has been the forte of Virginia Tech football teams, so it’s alumni and boosters generally preoccupied themselves worrying about the offense.

Apparently Coach Jimmy Sharpe is hearing a lot of that flak, in light of his squad’s production of only four touchdowns in three 1976 outings, but Tech’s third-year mentor avows he’s not worried...not since the Hokies have a 2-1 record.

“We’re not satisfied, of course,” observes Sharpe, “and we never should get to that stage, but I think our offense will get better.” Still, there could be some new wrinkles in the offense.

Yesterday Sharpe expressed pleasure with the progress of newcomers, but particularly in the back-field corps, and his practice schedule for this week – with Saturday being an open date – will give a closer look-see from their boss.

The first-time troops were rewarded with Monday off and Sharpe spent the first two days with his newcomers who’ll be rejoined by the veterans for workouts today.

Though declaring “I never liked weekends off when I was a player,” Sharpe said this time he welcomes one “because it’ll give time for injuries and bruises to heal before we start working hard” for the William and Mary game next week (Saturday, Oct. 2) in Blacksburg.

It’s only natural for Tech’s coach to openly fret about W&M, since the Tribe goes into its game this week against East Carolina with a 2-0 record, and he recalls a conversation he had in mid-Summer with Jim Root, his counterpart at Williamsburg.

“At that time,” Sharpe recalls, “Root said he thought he’d have a real good team, but it looks like they’re even better than that. Besides, they’re rather beaverish when they’re hungry.

With that Sharpe goes into a rather lengthy monologue about W&M’s ground-gaining performances (799 yards total offense in two games), the running of Keith Flamin and Jim Kruis, and a host of other items which point up the Indians’ surprising show of offensive-defense strength to date.

One thing that Sharpe didn’t talk about, but which bears keeping in mind, is that the W&M contest represents another goal (probably one of many) which the Hokies have set for themselves this season.

After having rubbed out the jinx of losing season-openers by defeating Wake Forest, the Techmen next set their sights on posting a winning record for the first month of the campaign for the first time since 1967.

That was the season Jerry Claiborne’s squad actually won its first seven games. Then it tailed off with losses to Miami (Florid.), Florida State and arch-rival Virginia Military Institute to wind up 7-3, which, as it turned out, prevented Tech from going to a post-season bowl three years in a row.

Since then the Techmen have been lucky to break even for their first four games, so if they can’t beat W&M it’ll be a break-even month again.

If that isn’t enough of an incentive, Sharpe will remind his athletes that — regardless of what the outcome is for the East Carolina-W&M game — the Indians will want to keep their record clean against State foes, already having taken care of VMI and University of Virginia.