Gobblers’ Drills Rugged For Critical W&M Scrap

By CHARLES KARMOSKY
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Take it from Jimmy Sharpe.... Virginia Tech is looking to its game Saturday with William and Mary as if the Indians were still undefeated, and predictions for a 35,000-plus crowd indicate State fandom headed for Blacksburg feels the same way.

Sharpe almost fell victim to a severe stuttering spell around noontime Monday while searching for superlatives to describe Jim Root’s squad despite the loss to East Carolina by the razor-thin 20-19 margin.

Sounding much like he could be watching movies of that game while answering the telephone, Sharpe’s assessment’s ran something like this:

“That’s one fine, good-good football team....

“They’re strong offensively and defensively. The offensive line really moves out, and the defense was so-o-o physical the way it rushed Carolina and put pressure on the Wishbone and the quarterback. That really got us seriously worried....

“On offense the quarterback (Tom Rozantz) had tremendous poise, and their fullback (Keith Fimian) is a real good one, but I don’t have to tell you that — we tried to recruit him.”

After just about running short of breath and superlatives, though, Sharpe had some things to say (in response to questions) which would tend to alleviate fear of W&M and apprehension among Tech boosters.

First, the Gobblers, though losing one player for the season (guard Mike Roy, knee surgery) and another for two-three weeks (defensive end Larry Blunt, mild shoulder separation), "could be in their best shape physically" for this test "than they have been for any game so far."

Second, while reminding how W&M pressured East Carolina’s quarterback and Wishbone options, Sharpe said “we got a lot of work done last week to beef up our passing game and are still trying to do something about getting off the "Big Play" that can break open a game.

One big-play performer given special and delicate treatment in a week of drills heavily marked by scrimmaging was fleet Roxcoe Coles. Nagging bruises are gone and Tech’s mentor says his breakaway runner from Virginia Beach ought to be in peak form.

Sharpe added that he hopes all these sessions did much about one phase of Tech’s overall offensive strategy which has been nagging him.

"Last year," he said, "we averaged about 80 plays a game. We got there (88) against Wake Forest, but since then (against Texas A&M and Southern Mississippi) we haven’t had the ball enough to do much with it.

"Against Southern we had possession only four times (series) the first half, so now we’re just averaging 66 plays per game. I’m not blaming the offense or the defense, but that’s just not enough, and we’ll have to do better than that if we’re going to beat William and Mary."

By way of offering testimony to what’s been done to remedy these problems, which are more serious in light of W&M’s strong start and impending appearance at Lane Stadium, Sharpe revealed the Gobblers’ practice sessions have been long and arduous.

After turning most attention to younger members of the Tech squad in the first three days last week, Sharpe put the whole roster through three and a half hours Thursday afternoon and then worked the Gobblers from 9 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Saturday — including good scrimmages on both days.

Obviously, if long and hard work is to get Tech ready for W&M, Sharpe ought to be satisfied — and he is, somewhat, but he adds that he will be completely pleased “only if we get more consistency in our running game” and “make more and better use of our passing, which we have not yet done.”

JIMMY SHARPE
Greatly Respects W&M