Parity Arriving in College Football

Need any more evidence that college football's great evening-up process is well under way?

Who would have believed that the best teams in the Old Dominion and North Carolina would be (1) William & Mary and (2) East Carolina?

The Indians have only to defeat Richmond in their season-ending game to lay claim to that honor, having already defeated VMI, Virginia and Virginia Tech, all by decisive margins.

East Carolina has beaten N.C. State and will play North Carolina on Oct. 23.

How that has happened, and how Penn State has now lost three straight for the first time since 1964, Miami of Ohio is 0-5 and Arizona State 0-3, is further proof that college football will continue to be more and more unpredictable.

This newspaper places a lot of emphasis on college recruiting, William & Mary and East Carolina, in the past, have not succeeded too well among the blue chippers, although ECU did have a banner season in '75 in North Carolina.

However, the inevitable conclusion is that while some of the alleged "big boys" are cutting each other up trying to recruit the top prospects, these new successes are being bred from what used to be considered second-line players.

The major schools seldom will sign a second-liner early, hoping against hope to land 30 of the best possible players. Meanwhile, the more realistic schools are going hard after these prospects.

The best backfield in Virginia right now clearly resides in Williamsburg, where sophomore quarterback Tommy Rozantz operates with junior running backs Keith Fimian and Jim Kruis.

Kruis and Rozantz are from Pennsylvania, and it goes without saying that neither was regarded as a blue chipper. Fimian is a solid 220-pounder from Virginia Beach who has blossomed at W&M.

It is unquestionably safe to say that W&M spent less to recruit all three of these players than Virginia Tech did in losing some of the hotshots it went after.

With W&M, it has been a simple maturing process. These three, and others on the youthful W&M squad, had to play last year because Coach Jim Root didn't have anybody better with experience. Not only did W&M lose its first eight games, but it seldom scored.

At another school, these three might still be sitting on the bench waiting an opportunity. As good as Rozantz is, and clearly he is the best quarterback in the state, he would not be this far advanced had he not played regularly as a freshman.

No matter how good the talent on any football team at the other 21 positions, no team is going to be much better than its quarterback. The lack of success at the other members of the state's Big Five can basically be attributed to less than excellent quarterbacking.

Tech's Jimmy Sharpe, still a supporter of the wishbone, is finding out the hard way that particular offense can't click without a weapon at quarterback.

This has been an uncommonly difficult season for some of the wishbone teams, although East Carolina is doing quite nicely, because lightly recruited Mike Weaver is a whiz.

Alabama got shut out by Georgia, mostly because it has no Richard Todd. Georgia Tech dropped the wishbone because freshman Mike Jolly can pass, but he can't cope with the intricate ball handling. Texas hasn't successfully replaced Marty Akins and Oklahoma, although unbeaten, has nobody as good as Steve Davis.

The pro-type quarterback almost disappeared from the college scene for a few years with all of the emphasis on running.

The pros, meanwhile, have found a way to open up their game. For a few seasons, pro football became deadly dull, with every team running the same offense and defense.

Now the pros are into some wild scoring affairs, or didn't you check Sunday's scores? Miami, trying to defend the NFL's best running attack, went to a 52-0 college defense against the Rams. So all Richard Harris did is throw for 436 yards while allowing rushing leader John Cappelletti to spend the afternoon blocking.

Some of the colleges already have re-discovered the forward pass. Unfortunately, too few of them are in Virginia.

But unless Virginia Tech finds some way to throw the ball, all those bright hopes and bowl talk of late summer is going to go down the drain in a hurry.

Even the long-awaited move of George Heath back to right half isn't likely to solve all of the problems. Until now, Tech's only offense has been halfback Roscoe Coles. And when Coles is held in check, as he was by W&M Saturday until the final minutes, the Tech attack is totally defused.

It still boils down to a quarterback, and a quarterback who can pass as well as run and read defenses.