Still No Respect

In the world of sports:

Just like Rodney Dangerfield, William and Mary’s football team “don’t get no respect.”

The Indians have beaten Virginia soundly and scared the pants off East Carolina in the last two weeks, but all I’ve heard out of the UVa and ECU camps is how poorly each team played against W&M.

There can be little doubt that W&M caught the Pirates at a perfect time. The N.C. State and North Carolina games are the big ones on the ECU schedule, and the following week always seems to produce a letdown.

“We’ve played bad for three straight years the week after we played State,” said East Carolina Coach Pat Dye.

Privately, a couple of Virginia coaches said that William & Mary really wasn’t all that good. “We just played so awful you wouldn’t believe it,” said one.

But you can’t take the results away from the Tribe. They whacked the Cavs good and they came within a missed extra point of upsetting ECU, which has a decent shot at an undefeated season.

It is highly unlikely that Virginia Tech will take the Indians lightly Saturday in Blacksburg. The last time the teams met there, W&M pulled off an upset. And last year’s game was close until Mitch Barnes turned on the speed (????) for 43 yards and a clinching TD in the third quarter.

Tech was flat in its last outing two weeks ago against Southern Miss. East Carolina had a hand in that, too. The Tech players probably couldn’t take USM seriously after it was belted 48-0 by ECU.

If Tech entertains any post-season thoughts, however, and certainly the Hokies do believe they’ll go 10-1, a big win Saturday would be helpful.

For the second straight game, Tech will be meeting a team which faced East Carolina the previous week. Comparing scores usually doesn’t mean much, but it’s a fact that the bowl people might look closely at the scores if they are having to choose between Tech and ECU.

What Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe would like is a reaction from his team comparable to the one at Richmond when the Spiders, coming off an open date, mauled VMI, 43-0. The Tech offense is overdue, but in each of Sharpe’s three seasons the Hokies have started slowly on attack, but warmed up before the year was too old.

The Tech-W&M crowd will exceed 32,000 and could rival the 35,000 the Gobblers attracted for the USM home opener. Whatever the final figure, it will be the largest crowd ever to see a Tech-W&M game. Traditionally, the Indians have been a poor draw. For one thing, they seldom bring many of their own fans.

W&M Coach Jim Root has every reason to wonder where those fans are. Root was perturbed when last week’s game in Williamsburg attracted just 13,500. Both teams were unbeaten, and ECU brought along a good-sized delegation. But the Peninsula-Tidewater area apparently hasn’t warmed to William & Mary.

Hindsight is much better than foresight, but you have to wonder what coaches are thinking about these days. Several key games in pro and college football have been botched because of failure to call for what would seem to be an almost automatic field goal.

Two weeks ago, the Minnesota Vikings marched to the Los Angeles 11 late in the overtime. If Fred Cox can’t kick a field goal from that distance, why not run a couple of quarterback sneaks first?

Instead, Fran Tarkenton tried a pass which was intercepted and the game ended in a tie.

Last week at Georgia Tech, Clemson marched to the Yellow Jacket six with a minute left in a 24-24 tie. Unaccountably, from that spot, on first down, the Tigers called for a pass. But quarterback Steve Fuller fumbled and Tech recovered at the 11 to preserve the deadlock.

What doesn’t make sense is that Clemson would elect to pass. Surely the Tigers could have gained a couple of yards straight ahead, and a field goal would have been nothing more than an extra point. The Clemson kicker already had made three PATs plus a field goal.

Nobody ever knows when a fumble will happen, but certainly a quarterback sneak is the safest available play. In both these cases, and in several more around the nation, it would appear that the coaches were trying to score touchdowns when field goals would have done nicely.

For years, Houston tried to get into the Southwest Conference and when the Cougars were finally accepted, they had to wait six years before coming eligible in football. So far, Houston has benefited greatly from being a member of a league.

Not only do the Cougars have a pair of upset wins over Baylor and Texas A&M, but they also sold out Rice Stadium last week for the Aggies. Houston pulled off the stunner before a crowd of 70,000. The Cougars never were able to draw, even with their great teams, against other independents. But playing the Aggies is something else. Surprisingly, against A&M, Houston held fullback George Woodard to 15 yards in nine carries. This was the same Houston defense that was destroyed by Florida the week before.

Two former Radford stars, soph Jan Fisher and freshman Roger Wills, have quit the Virginia Tech football team. Wills originally was going to go to East Tennessee, but signed with Tech late in the summer.

N.C. State has had great success in basketball, but Coach Norm Sloan must rival Tennessee’s Ray Mears for losing players. Three members of the Wolfpack have transferred to other schools. Eric Agardy and Mike Buurma left during the last school year, and guard Bobo Jackson transferred to Murray State this fall. State is now down to 11 scholarship players.