Answers, Not All Tribe Wants
In This Meeting With Hokies

By Harold Pearson

Just 90 seconds of the fourth quarter decided last year's Oyster Bowl battle between Virginia Tech and William and Mary. That's how long it took the Hokies to move from a 10-7 tight-collar situation to 17-7 for some breath.

The other 58 minutes, 30 seconds affected a far greater decision for the Indians, who lost that game, 24-7.

"I don't think there's any question the Virginia Tech game last year answered a lot of questions," said W&M coach Jim Root early this week.

To that point, the Indians were 0-7 and went to 0-8, but they won two of three after that. They have won two of three this year, the loss coming last week by a single point to East Carolina.

"That (Oyster Bowl) definitely was a turnaround point," continued Root. "This week could be another step in the same direction."

This afternoon (1:30), Root will send his Indians out onto Lane Stadium's natural turf to do battle with the Hokies before more people than any previous Indian-Hokie battle ever drew, 30,000-plus. Basically, they will be the same players who lost in that '75 affair.

But there is more than the basic to this game.

"IT MEANS MORE than usual," said Root, "because we're both better than usual. They've got a good program going and we've got a good program going.

"The cat's out of the bag. We've got a pretty good team; we're somebody to beat now. We haven't been in the past."

What brought about the change?

"Well," answered Root, "they say you lose one game for every freshman you play. We played eight freshmen (in '75) and lost nine games (of 11)."

Root doesn't think it fair to ask the first-year men to play with the older boys. "It's one thing to have the skill," he said, "another to be able to execute and perform each week."

All his '75 freshmen, due to circumstances, "have had a chance to perform." A week ago, they did everything but beat East Carolina, losing, 20-19, to a team that had beaten Southern Mississippi, 48-0, and N. C. State, 23-14. That's the same Southern Miss team Tech unoffensively whipped, 16-7, two weeks ago in its last outing.

"We lost the football game," said Root, "but we won a whole lot of things deep inside. . . lot of confidence in ourselves."

HOKIE COACH JIMMY Sharpe recognizes this and figures "we'll have a heck of a fight. . . one of the biggest challenges we've had in a long time."

In terms of relative strength, Root considers Tech "right with East Carolina . . . would be a tossup. . . and I think our game's a tossup."

Physically, there are some bruises and other hurts that worry Root, who was a winner last time he took the Tribe to Blacksburg.

"I would like to have a week off — not to prepare, we did that last week — to get well," he said.

Psychologically? "I've never felt it was too much to ask people to be emotionally prepared each week," he said. "There are only 11. I don't see how getting emotionally ready for Virginia Tech could be a problem.

"Our team has been through much greater disappointment and turmoil than a one-point loss to East Carolina."

All before last year's Oyster Bowl.