By Mike Bevans

The Virginia Tech-Virginia Military rivalry will be busied to Richmond as part of the Tobacco Festival for the second time in three years Saturday at City Stadium. For the Hokies, the 1974 meeting added up to a nicotine stain on what turned out to be a 4-7 campaign.

"We lost," said Tech offensive tackle Keith "Whale" Gibson, a sophomore at the time. "That's the only memory I've got of that game."

The Keydets prevailed, 22-17, en route to a 7-4 season that included the Southern Conference championship. Tech retaliated a year ago, however, pasting VMI, 33-0, in Blacksburg.

**THIS TIME AROUND,** it will be a game either team can ill afford to lose. Tech has been on a win-lose-win-lose binge with the meat of its schedule still to come, while VMI lost its first three before overturning Furman last week.

"We expect them (the Keydets) to be fired up," said Gibson. "They always want to beat Tech ... just like everybody else does."

That's what happens when you blitz the rest of the "Big 5" as the Hokies did last season en route to an 8-3 record. William and Mary already has found revenge in a 27-15 triumph last weekend in Blacksburg.

"Going undefeated in the state last year makes it hard to get up all the time," said Gibson, a 6-1, 285-pound senior and three-year lettermen.

Can the Hokies get up for the Keydets? "We can . . . we've got to," he said. "We know what they can do from two years ago. That should only make us get up even more."

Something or somebody better come along and perk up the Hokies' offense, before it's too late. All of those high hopes for a 12th game (read that bowl appearance) this season will be washed out, if Tech doesn't suddenly begin playing like Hercules unchained.

"We've always been slow getting started," noted Gibson. "We were 2-2 last year when the offense broke loose. Nobody's really down."

**HALFBACK ROSCOE COLES** has put together back-to-back 100-yard games and Gibson pointed out, "That is a real good sign. Sometimes it's just one person causing the breakdown. One more block could break out a long run.

"The execution is getting better. If everybody was to open up at the same time, we'd have a good game."

The Hokies' Wishbone returned virtually intact from a year ago and counts eight seniors among its starters. But Tech has yet to have a 300-yard game on the ground and has topped 230 yards rushing only once — in the season opener at Wake Forest (274).

"I haven't heard anybody say anything about getting rid of it (the Wishbone)," said Gibson. "Everybody likes it and we're sticking with it."

Other than breakdowns in execution, Gibson was at a loss in explaining the Hokies' slow start on offense. From his vantage point along the line, he has found little in the way of new looks from opposing defenses.

"WILLIAM AND MARY used a lot of stunts with the safety that hurt a lot and we're playing against stacked defenses sometimes," he said.

The Hokies continue their optimistic approach. "I'd like to be able to win the rest of them . . . go out on a winning note," said Gibson. "I started on a bad note (2-9) under the other coaching staff. I hope to go out on a good year."