Virginia Tech 'Junks' VMI

By BOB TEITLERAUM

RICHMOND — All week long, VMI coaches feared that Virginia Tech would junk its wishbone offense.

As the sun set here Saturday, though, the only thing Tech had linked were the Keydets. For this day, at least, Tech's wishbone was devastating and the Hokies pulled away in the second half for a 37-7 win.

"I'm a wishbone man and have been," said Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe about any possible moves to dump his team's offense.

"There was no thought of ever doing that. Everyone questioned. 'What's wrong? What's wrong? We weren't scoring enough points.'"

But we had a week of preparation. We only practiced three days. A lot of people stood out.

Still, Tech didn't immediately overwhelm VMI. It was 10-0 at the half after the Hokies wasted a pair of scoring opportunities. Quarterback Mitch Barnes fumbled into the end zone and later Roscoe Coles was stopped cold on a pitch out at the VMI 25 when the Hokies had a fourth and one situation.

"I just flubbed. But I didn't think, 'Here we go again,' said Barnes, who worries less than anyone about Tech's wishbone offense.

"We were executing and we had some good blocks on the corner man. That makes all the difference when you run the wishbone."

What made the difference in the first half, though, was the pre-game flip of the coin. VMI won and somehow ended up kicking into a strong wind when Keydet captains Ed Glacken and Eric Hutlings made a wrong choice.

"We were going to defend if we won the toss," said Sharpe, noting the strong wind that made punting rather difficult on some occasions.

VMI Coach Bob Tholeman just shook his head. "In the excitement they said the wrong thing," he explained.

"We were so jacked. I've seen that happen in the pro leagues, but it doesn't mean it should happen here."

That wrong choice, though, kept VMI backed up most of the first half. It also helped Tech do all the scoring in the opening 39 minutes.

All but three plays of the first quarter were run in VMI territory following a short kickoff and only eight second-quarter plays were run at Tech's side of the 50.

The Hokies threatened the entire first quarter, but got only a 47-yard field goal from Paul "Chili Bear" Eggle. The Hokies used a short Keydet punt near the end of the quarter to start a 52-yard drive, but this threat ended with Barnes fumble.

However, VMI was forced to kick from the end zone. Even with the wind, the punt went only to the Keydet 41. It took Tech eight plays to get its first touchdown with Roscoe Coles bunching through several Keydet tacklers for an 11-yard scoring jaunt.

"It was a crucial time of the game," said Coach Sharpe. "We needed something to happen."

George Heath Scores First Touchdown of Day for Virginia Tech