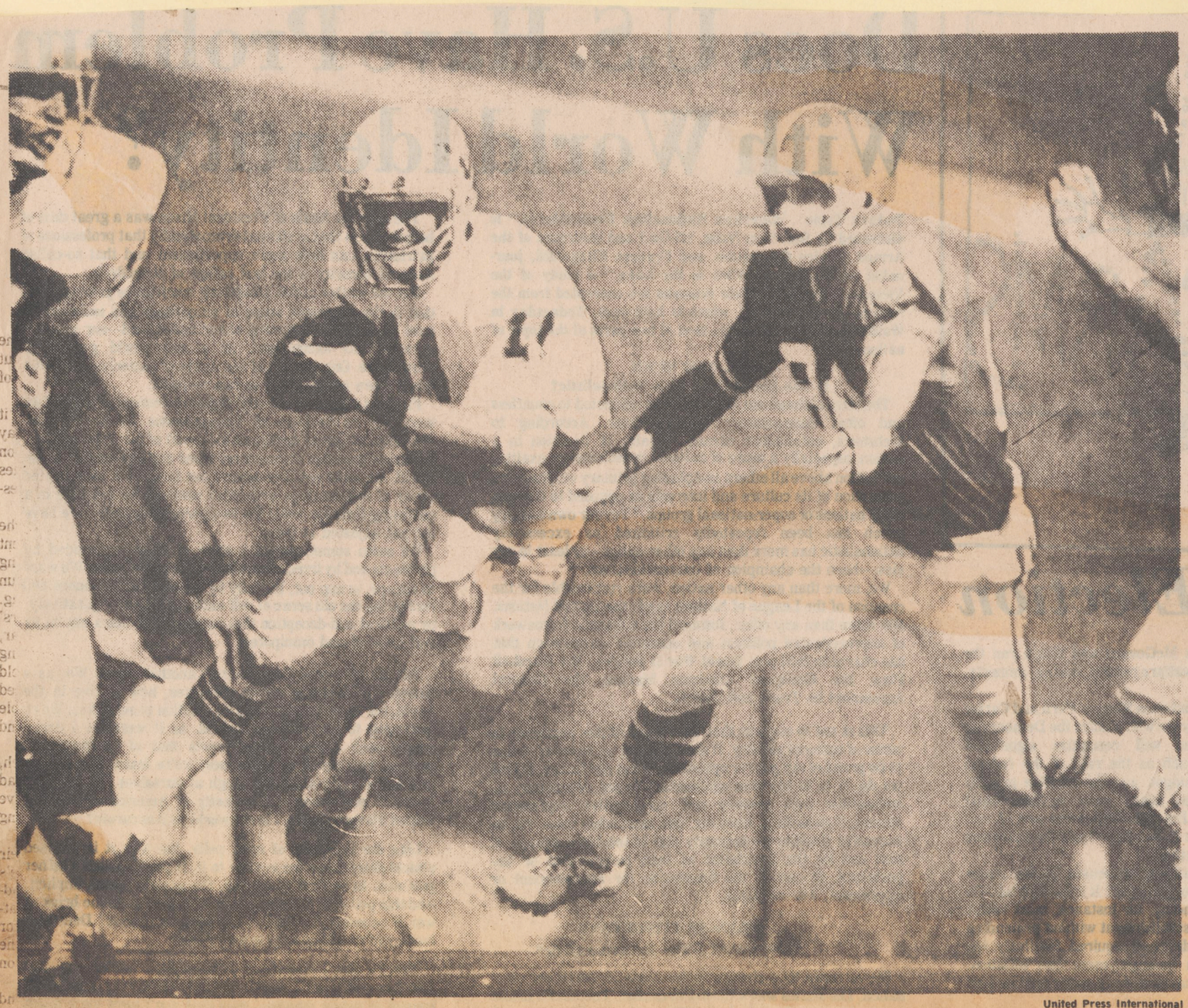

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VA. TECH'S QUARTERBACK EDDIE SNELL (11) SCRAMBLES
VMI's Greg Arnett (84) In Hot Pursuit During Second Quarter Action.

# Hokies Run Through VMI

By Jerry Vernon
Staff Writer

It took Virginia Tech more than a half to convince Virginia Military Institute that a running attack just wouldn't cut the Hokie line at Richmond City Stadium, yesterday.

This lack of Keydet insight left the Lexington school staring at the short end of a 27-7 score at the end of the 28th Annual Tobacco Bowl.

Even if the Keydets had moved to an aerial attack sooner in the game the results would have probably been the same. The Hokie defense allowed VMI only five receptions in 17 attempts.

Tech, on the other hand, never went to the air. The Hokies did it all on the ground churning out 372 yards in 77 plays.

"We're a running football team," said Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe in the cramped quarters of the winning locker room. "We work on our passing everyday, but we didn't need it today."

The Keydets discovered in the first half of play the Tech defense planned to improve the weak showing it sponsored last week against William& Mary. The Keydets could grind out only 19 tough rushing yards in the first 30 minutes while Tech planted ten points on the board.

Place-kicker Paul Engle hit a field goal from 47 yards with 3:58 remaining in the opening period. The opening score culminated an eight play 41-yard drive highlighted with slick backfield operation by quarterback Mitcheal Barnes, and a trio of running backs, Roscoe Coles, George Heath and Paul Adams.

Halfback Heath put the first touchdown of the game on the board halfway through the second period with an 11-yard run over the left side of the Keydet line. His efforts gave the Hokies the score they had missed by only seven feet minutes earlier.

At the beginning of the second period the Hokies stood on the VMI 27 after driving 25 yards. Five plays later Tech owned a first and goal on the Keydet two, but Barnes lost the grip on a snap. The Hokies' hopes turned to despair as a huddle of VMI players jumped on the ball.

"I just dropped the ball," shrugged Barnes in the locker room. "It happens, you know."

A new bright spot in the Hokie line-up came out in the third period of play. Wide receiver Greg Payne, substituting for injured Henry Bradley, returned a Keydet punt 70 yards for six points. Earlier in the game, the 167-lb. senior ran back another for 43 yards.

These were the first runbacks I've ever had in a game, " grinned Payne. "I didn't think I was going to make the touchdown until the last 20 to 25 yards. A lot of key blocks helped me and the kick was high so I had a lot of time to get underneath it."

Payne's score perhaps served

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as the necessary padding for Tech's lead. The Keydets scored their only touchdown of the day at 9:17 of the third quarter after pass interference was called on the Hokies at the Tech three-yard line. Two plays later fullback Steve Oddi pushed his 208-lb. frame into the end zone, trimming Tech's lead to 10-7.

But even before, Payne churned out his flashing runback, the Tech offensive unit put together the day's longest touchdown drive-65 yards. Coles chalked up 48 of his day's 118 yards in the drive before fullback Adams earned scoring honors on a one-yard plunge, giving Tech a 17-7 spread.

For all practical purposes the game ended with Payne's return. The Keydets were put on simmer and everything belonged to the Hokies after his score.

Barnes added a score to the Tech lead with a 46-yard run in the fourth quarter on an option keeper at 13:15. Sophomore running back Dennis Scott closed out the day's scoring with a 37-yard run around end with 4:53 left in the game.

Yesterday's game was filled with high emotion that lent confusion to the opening of the game and some sideline excitement to the estimated 21,000 fans who sat through a brisk wind for more than two and a half hours.

The Keydets committed a strategic error when the coin was flipped for kick-off honors. VMI won the toss and elected to boot after Tech decided to take the goal with the wind.

"I told the entire team before we left the locker room that if we won the toss we would take the wind." lamented Keydet Coach Bob Thalman. "Hell, it was a sale in the beginning. But with all the excitement, emotion and all, our captains got confused. Neverthless, I accept the responsibility."

The game's excitement carried to the sidelines late in the fourth quarter. Tech and VMI cadets scuffled in the end zone when a group of Hokie corpsmen approached the cadets sideline seats with a victory banner. After a few minutes of pushing and shoving the police disbanded the excited students without incident.