Gobblers 'Got It All Together'

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RICHMOND — After it was all over, Virginia Tech was convinced it had finally found an offense. The Gobblers' wishbone rolled to 372 yards rushing and Tech had visions of greatness.

The Hokies had good reason to be happy. They had just beaten VMI, 37-7, in their best offensive showing of the year. They looked nothing like the team that had struggled to move the ball in its first four games.

"We exploded like we're capable of doing," said Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe. "They got it all together today. I knew we had the opportunity to be a great football team."

One game does not make a team great. For the last two years, the Gobblers have started slowly on offense, exploded in one game and had a good offense for the rest of the season.

"With the wishbone, you need one big game to know how potent it is. We had lost that confidence from last year but a game like this will give it back to us," claimed Tech quarterback Mitch Barnes.

"The difference today was mainly execution. We ran the wishbone like it is supposed to be run. We stayed away from the penalties and stupid mistakes that have been killing us," Barnes continued.

During the week, Sharpe moved George Heath from fullback to the right halfback spot where he had played until this year. That was a boost to Tech's offense.

"Both Roscoe (Coles) and George (Heath) were outside threats. Heath has more speed," said Gobbler fullback Paul Adams in reference to the man Heath replaced. "I think you can notice the difference in speed."

"Moving George helped a whole lot," agreed Coles, who was the game's leading rusher with 111 yards. "There were always four or five people waiting for me when I went around right end before, but because of George, we ran to both sides and they couldn't stop us."

But Sharpe was reluctant to cite that one move as the key to Tech's greatly improved offensive showing. "I can't say that made a big difference," said Sharpe. "Both men block well." Heath finished the game with 67 yards.

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Instead, Sharpe gives Barnes the credit for the improvement. "Mitchell executed extremely well."

"We were executing well," Barnes said. "We had confidence we could move the ball."

The Gobblers had so much confidence they could move the ball up the field that they didn't throw a pass all day. Barnes dropped back to pass once, but was sacked. That was early in the first quarter.

"We didn't need any passes," said Coles. "Why take any chances if you don't have to?"

"We don't like going into a game saying we're going to throw," Barnes explained. "The other team is going to make us throw. We didn't have to throw today, so we didn't."

According to Sharpe, "I don't care if we run or throw as long as we win the game. We work on passing every day, but we didn't have to use it today."

Two of the highlights for the game for Tech were a 46-yard TD run by Barnes and a 70-yard punt return for a touchdown by Greg Payne. Payne is a senior who has seen little to no action for the Gobblers. He was doing the punt returning because Henry Bradley, Tech's returner, was injured.

"I did some returning in high school and in spring games at Tech, but this was my first regular game. I was nervous at first, but after the first catch you get confidence," said Payne.

"I guess a run like that is a combination of being a little quick and watching the blocks. This is the first time the blocks have happened like that. It was the blocking that did it."

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS


PASSING: WMU, Clark 15-17-0, 83 yards.

RECEIVING: WMU, Barnett 5-46, Ferguson 1-14, Oddi 1-14.