Gobblers Will Win THE GAME 17-7

It is not the oldest game, and in many years it has not been the most important, but what passes for THE GAME in Virginia comes off Saturday afternoon in Charlottesville.

Virginia and Virginia Tech will meet for the 58th time and an overflow crowd of 31,000 will attend, sufficient proof that even losing can’t kill fan interest.

The Cavaliers, as anybody who hasn’t been vacationing on Mars lately knows, have the nation’s longest losing streak and a history of past failure that dates back better than two decades.

Virginia Tech, on the other hand, has had its moments of football glory, but somehow national attention has eluded the Hokies just when it seemed that it would be attained.

This season has been typical of many in recent years. Virginia has lost all of its games, while Tech has won three times in five outings, but has not been as elegant as expected.

The Gobblers, naturally, are favored. The figure being tossed around most often is 14 points, and you can’t fault the bettors for being leery. The best thing you can say about either team’s season is that it has been unpredictable.

Tech is coming off an 8-3 season and has almost everybody back. The Gobblers were exciting a year ago when they had the ball. This year, for the most part, the offense has been a relative dud.

Virginia played well in its opener against Washington, fighting to a 17-17 tie after three quarters. That was the last time the UVa offense looked good.

Here’s a look at Saturday’s game, with some thoughts on what might happen:

TECH OFFENSE: The Hokies set a goal of 400 yards per game offensively this year—300 on the ground and 100 passing. Thus far they are averaging only 271, and that figure was inflated last week when Tech rushed for 372 yards against outclassed VMI. The Gobblers have only 200 yards in the air, and have tried just 31 passes, none against VMI. Moses Foster is the only Gobbler with more than three catches.

Now that George Heath has moved to right halfback, Tech figures to be better than in the first four games. Roscoe Cole is the big threat at left half with 10 games of more than 100 yards, a school record. Tech’s longest run is 46 yards by (surprise!) quarterback Mitch Barnes. Cole had a 37-yarder against Southern Miss. Coach Jimmy Sharpe insists Tech can and will throw, but look for the Cavaliers to try and defend as well as possible against the outside runs while conceding the pass.

VIRGINIA DEFENSE: The Cavaliers are last in the ACC on defense, allowing 441 yards per game, while UVa has netted just 234 yards offensively, also last in the league. The defense is especially young, with nine freshmen and seven sophomores listed on the two deep. Freshmen Louis Collins, Steve Potter, Bill Bridges and Tony Blount are all starters. By contrast, Virginia has only one first-year player (tackle Doug McDougald) listed on the top 22 and he plays behind Beasley.

Typical of a unit so young, the Cavaliers have been victimized by the big play, and injuries also have taken their toll. Numerous player switches are still being made, with Collins now starting at end in place of injured Vincent Maddox. In the past couple of games, UVa has been tough up the middle, but hurt badly to the outside, where some Gobblers do the right. Cornerback Derrick Glasper is a key man who will have heavy responsibilities.

KICKING GAME: Each team has a good punter. George Roberts averages 40.8 for Tech and UVa’s Russell Henderson is eighth nationally at 45.2. Paul “Chili Bean” Engle has five field goals for Tech and Joe Jenkins three for the Cavs. Each has excellent range. This should be a standoff unless a 10-man Tech rush bothers Henderson.

TECH COACH: Jimmy Sharpe is 36, a graduate of Alabama and a long-time assistant to Bear Bryant. His Tech record is 15-12 and he has built well in three years. Sharpe is an advocate of the wishbone, in spite of recent criticism of that offense.

VIRGINIA COACH: Dick Bestwick, 46, is in his first year as a head coach after a distinguished career as an assistant at several schools, the last being Georgia Tech. Bestwick has installed the veer offense. He is a graduate of North Carolina.

THE SERIES: Tech won last year, 24-17, for its 28th win against 25 losses and four ties. UVa’s last win was the controversial 28-27 thriller in Charlottesville two years ago. Because UVa plays four ACC games, this will count as a conference encounter.

OTHER FACTS: UVa will honor the 1941 team, which won eight and lost one. The star of that team was Bullet Bill Dudley, who led the nation in scoring and total offense.

PREDICTED WINNER: Virginia Tech 17, Virginia 7. Wicks Vital in UVa Attack—Page 30