By JERRY RATCLIFFE
Senior Sports Editor

Virginia Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe believes that last Saturday’s narrow loss to 13th ranked Tulsa was the best football game any of his Hokie teams have played since his arrival three years ago.

Sharpe even feels that it might have been the best game ever played by a modern Tech team. “We’ve come a long way...” noted the Gobbler coach who can obtain his 19th and 20th wins in his career by closing out the season with two victories against Richmond and Florida State, both on the road.

He realizes it won’t be an easy task, but is looking forward to the challenge.

“Since we’re coming off such a great game, it makes this week the biggest game in our history,” noted the Hokies chief. “We’re preparing for Richmond exactly like we do all the rest.”

Richmond, in its first year as an independent, is 3-6 and a loser in three of its last four ball games. Last week the Spiders fell to East Carolina 20-10.

But the loss cost the Capital team even more than just another mark in the losing column.

Quarterback Lerry Shaw was injured and will not be ready for Saturday’s showdown and middle guard Dickie Childress is also out of the starting lineup.

“I’m excited about going to Richmond, and I hope our players are as excited as I am,” said Sharpe.

Childress was injured on the next to the last play of the ECU game. Richmond’s top tackle for the season went down with an ankle injury. Although X-rays showed no break, he will be lost for the remainder of the season.

Shaw was injured in the first quarter, when he was hit on the arm on a consecutive pass play and his elbow swelled to the size of an orange.

Replacing Shaw will be 6-3, 195 junior Dave Taylor, while spelling Childress will be freshman Ken Gilliam (6-2,225).

The Hokies aren’t without injuries either. Senior quarterback Mitchell Barnes is questionable after sustaining an apparent wrist fracture against Tulsa. “We won’t know about Mitchel until Thursday,” noted the Gobbler coach.

“Doctor Bullock will examine him again. But right now we’re preparing to go with David Lamie (sophomore). Unless something happens, we figure we’ll at best have Mitchell as a backup.”

Sharpe indicated that Roscoe Coles will play although he does have an injured shoulder. “He’ll be able to play, he just can’t take any shots on his shoulder.”

Coles broke two Tech rushing records last week despite playing with pain from an injured shoulder.

Playing Richmond is not playing any other 3-4 football team. Since they’re in Tech’s backyard the Spiders have nothing to lose and everything to gain. “Beating us would make the season for those folks,” added the Tech coach.

“We know they’re going to be sky high, as we’re just going to try and simplify things. Those people (in-state schools), get after us unbelievably,” he added.

The key to this game for Tech might be the key to most football games, execution and poise. “The team that makes the fewest mistakes almost always wins. We’ve got to maintain our poise. We’ve been under fire an awful lot this year, so keeping our poise will be important.”

If you don’t believe that, the last time a Tech team went to Richmond, the Spiders won 17-10 in 1969.

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