Gobblers Fall Into Spiders' Web

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RICHMOND—Virginia Tech failed to cash in on two first half scoring opportunities while opportunistic Richmond charged to a 16-6 Big Five upset between the two interstate rivals Saturday afternoon in City Stadium.

It was the first time since 1961 that the Hokies had blushed the heavily favored Hokies and the next to the worst defeat Richmond has ever dealt to their cross-state rivals. Richmond could never establish momentum in the game with surging starting quarterback Mitchel Barnes splitting time with sophomore David Lamie. Barnes had been questionable all week after sustaining a wrist injury in a close loss to 15th-ranked Tulsa last weekend.

"Richmond played with a great deal of enthusiasm which we didn’t," said a dejected Tech coach Jimmy Sharpe. "I thought we were ready to play. Our kids were loose, maybe too much so, I was hoping that was confidence."

The Hokies, 4-6 on the season, held a 6-0 lead over Tech behind two well-engineered drives by junior quarterback Doug Taylor, making his first varsity start. Taylor replaced regular Larry Shaw, who was injured in the first quarter of last week’s 29-10 loss to East Carolina.

Showing a lot of poise under pressure, Taylor cooled led Richmond to a pair of touchdown drives after Tech’s offense sputtered on the first potential scoring drive at the Spider 5, then later in the second quarter after forcing Tech to punt.

After a pair of turnovers by each team, the Hokies began to drive on the unheralded Spider defense. Barnes passed to a wide-open tight end Dave Dolphi for 22 yards and a first down at the UR 3, followed by another first down at the 14 via a 14-yard pass to Roscoe Coles run with a facemask penalty back on.

Barnes handed off three times to fullback Paul Adams and halfback George Heath driving to the five. Tech called a time out with fourth and less than a foot, but the following play, an Adams run, was short with 1:41 to go. Richmond took over at its own five.

Taylor methodically led the 95-yard, 15-play drive to Richmond’s first score. With backs Ed Keely, Buster Jackson and Tim Thacker alternating carries, the Hokies nicklebacked and dined the Hokies defense to death with Taylor mixing it in a firstdown pass to tight end Tim Manwaring for 14 yards to the 26 and eventually a seven yard rollout aerial to veteran receiver John Call to manufacture the first score in the upset. It was Taylor’s first touchdown pass.

With three minutes left in the first period, the Hokies, now 6-4 and 2-2 against interstate teams, were down 7-0. But the Hokies offense continued its lackluster performance putting on the next two possessions having netted only three first downs after the first 17 minutes of play.

Taylor and company were superb. Using freshman Thacker (a hometown boy from Richmond) and fleet-footed Jackson effectively, Taylor combined with Manwaring for a big first down at the Gobbler 35.

Tech’s usually aggressive defense didn’t worry Taylor, who went eight back to the air, this time connecting with Jackson who was wide open at the 12. Jackson raced in untouched and suddenly Tech was in serious trouble.

The Hokies trailed 14-0 with 9:40 showing on the clock. Henry Bradley intercepted a Taylor pass in the end zone late in the half, but Tech again punted. The Hokies defense played their best series of the day by late in the game and Richmond to minus two yards on four plays, seemingly firing up the squad.

Barnes, who completed only three of nine passes for 53 yards, connected with wide receiver Moses Foster for 17 yards to the Tech 40. With Coles and Heath rattling off two more first downs to the 16, it appeared Tech’s offense was finally on the prowl.

Coles ran twice to the eight with a penalty moving the ball to the three and another first down. Heath and Coles got the call again but cracked it only to the one where Coles was met by defensive tackle Orlando Branch, Richmond’s defensive leader on the day with eight solo tackles.

Tech, which was out of timeouts, lined up with Coles gaining to within inches of the goaline. With time running out the Hokies tried to line up for another shot at the goaline but couldn’t get the play off.

"There’s no question that hurt us," said Sharpe. "Before we had a scoring opportunity, then again just before the half and we didn’t get anything."

"Sure, it would have made a difference if we had scored before the half. The score would have been different anyway."

Tech would only get one more shot at scoring, while Richmond’s 14-point margin proved to be an insurmountable lead.

Early in the third quarter the Hokies made their deepest penetration as a result of a Keith McCarter fumble recovery of a Taylor miscalculation at the Richmond 34. After three running plays Tech was only on the 31 and soccer-style placekicker Paul “Chile Beans” England missed a 46-yard field goal attempt with 6:02 remaining.

Tech’s field goal attempt only once more in the game and Spider cornerback Becky Crawford erased the comeback attempt with an interception of a Lamie pass at his own 31 Crawford, who was converting Fielder, didn’t even see the ball which miraculously

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played in his hands like metal to a magnet.

On Tech’s next series Barnes was chased out of his own end zone for a safety by left tackle Billy Chinikile.

Richmond’s success at stopping Tech came indirectly from stopping the Gobbler most dangerous offensive weapon, Roscoe Coles.

The junior running back failed in his bid to gain 1,000 yards rushing in a season for the second year in a row. Coles, who netted only 41 yards in 16 rushes, is 41 yards short of the 1,000-yard barrier. The Tech back was held to a minus one yard rushing in the second half of five carries.

Richmond had keyed on Coles all day. "We knew they’d stack to our light end side to keep us from doing some things we like to do," noted the Tech coach.

"We told Adams before the game that we would give it to him the first three times, but on the second carry he fumbled. Sure they keyed on Roscoe, but it still comes down to making something happen and we didn’t do that."

Richmond had 296 yards total offense to 214 for Tech, the second best week for the Spider defense which shutdown East Carolina’s scoring machine last week.

"The two goalline stands were great for us," said Richmond Coach Jim Tall. "After the first one we had a great drive (79 yards). Everything went pretty good. I never thought that we just had the game until the end.

"The big thing you have to do against the wishbone is keep that spread off the corners and we did that today."

Tech only managed 171 yards on the ground, below par for the Gobbler.

Adams netted 61 yards while Heath added 52. Thacker, making his varsity debut, led Richmond with 77 yards while Jackson added 71. Taylor completed five of nine passes for 81 yards.

Richmond faces another Big Five opponent next week in neighboring William & Mary, while Tech hopes to put the cap on a somewhat disappointing season at Tallahassee against Florida State.