FSU Boss Expects Seminoles To Lose

By JERRY VERNON
Sports Writer

Talking to Bobby Bowden makes you feel like you've just swallowed a shot of orange juice. His conversation leaves you refreshed.

The first year Florida State University head football coach is a man who finds time for humor despite his team's less than impressive 4-6 season record.

"Tell Jimmy (Sharpe) we're going to get those Southern Baptists on him," laughed the former West Virginia University coach over the telephone Monday. "I've been praying... every day."

Bowden's request has been centered on weather this week. He hopes it's hot when Virginia Tech travels to Tallahassee in the "sunshine state" this weekend for both teams' season finale. The Seminole coach is not asking for high temperatures simply for the sake of being a gracious Florida host.

"The weather would have to be hot," said Bowden, "to make any difference and we're not expecting that."

One thing the coach anticipates almost for sure this weekend is his young team's seventh loss of the season.

"Every time we play we hope to win," warned the coach.

"But I still think we have a long way to go. In my opinion... we're not good enough (to beat Tech) yet. But we're playing close enough to make a game out of it."

In fact Bowden may underplay his team's ability. The Seminoles walloped powerful Boston College earlier this season on the road. They nipped a stubborn North Texas State team last week, 22-21 in the snow and have posted narrow losses to their two toughest opponents this season, Oklahoma and Florida.

Last season Tech managed to nip the Seminoles in Blacksburg 13-10 on now graduated, place-kicker Wayne Latimer's school record 61-yard field goal. 33 seniors returned from that Seminole squad this season, but only nine play in starting roles this time around.

Two Seminole seniors have been Florida's top scoring punch this year. Quarterback Jimmy Black has led Florida's predominate passing attack with nearly a 60 per cent completion rate. The 5-11 scrambler has connected on 96 of his 165 throws for 1381 yards and eight touchdowns. Three of the scores went to 6-4 tight end Ed Beckman who has pulled in 34 passes this season. Freshman wide receiver Kurt Unglaub leads the Seminoles in receiving yardage with 31 catches for 553 yards and three touchdowns.

Black has also been the Seminoles most explosive runner in the school's history. His 347 rushing yards this year leaves him only 95 yards shy of the Florida career record, a meager 1791 yards.

"We've never had a running quarterback at Florida State before," said Bowden. "Black's been the first one and he's a good one. But we're not talking about a 1000 yard a year... it's more like 350. We pass more than we run."

In one game this year the Seminoles went to the air on 57 occasions. "The weather is more conducive for the passing game than the running game here," argued Bowden who spent the mid-sixties as Seminole assistant coach before going to West Virginia for six years where he beat Tech three times in three tries.

Florida's leading rusher, 183-pound junior running back Larry Key, has totaled 558 yards on 131 carries while 205-pound senior fullback Jeff Leggett has charged behind a young and lightweight offensive line 62 times for 301 yards.

The Seminoles lost only one player from the defensive secondary that ranked second in the nation last season against the pass. Ironically, only one of those returnees, 5-10 defensive back Bobby Jackson, is starting this season.

"That statistic is misleading," admitted Bowden. "If teams run on you they don't throw. Sometimes you can have the best passing defense in the country and not be too good."

This season proves the coach's point. His Seminoles have allowed only 91 passing yards per game this year while surrendering a massive 271 ground yards each outing. And the run is something Bowden expects this Saturday.

"If they (Tech) get their ground game cranked up they won't pass," he said. "Running is the bread and butter of the wishbone. But they'll pass when you least expect it. That's the toughest (part of Tech's offense)."

Bowden has played Tech for the past 13 years and admitted, "They have been a thorn in my side."

He expects the same pain this Saturday from the Hokies, "I think Jimmy has a good foundation," confessed Bowden, "and we're just getting our program started. If they get cranked up they're really tough. I just hope we can play with them."

SEMINOLES' BOBBY BOWDEN
Says His Team Underdog