Mason On Sports

You could define science fiction as tales of the unreal—flights into fancy about things which would be unusual if they happened, but really never could happen. You could define it as tales of the bizarre and outlandish, gross exaggerations, or you could simply say Virginia vs. Virginia Tech.

Twice in the past two years Virginia has started its football season in an unimpressive fashion, to put it charitably. The Cavaliers have limped into that game against the Hokies with records of 0-5. And twice Tech was fortunate to come away with its hide.

Virginia, which had scored a grand total of one touchdown this season, scored two more before a sellout crowd at Lane Stadium and only a strong defensive effort by Tech in the last quarter kept the Cavs from a third score.

The Hokies offense produced a field goal by Paul "Chile Bean" Engle after a drive stalled in the opening moments and then vanished for the rest of the half. "The Bean" incidentally is having an outstanding year.

The Walloos, generated by surprise quarterback Chip Mark of Charlottesville, beat out a touchdown. Tech, flatter than that famous cake of the 60's that was left out in the rain in MacArthur Park, was behind by a non-fictional but weird 7-3 count at halftime.

Engle's second field goal, in the second half, ignited the Hokie rocket, the touchdown by Roscoe Coles and a two point pass play from David Lambie to Kenny Lewis provided the blast-off, but the Gobbler never got into orbit.

Tech's offense still could prove to be explosive but unless the fuse burns faster it won't make that much difference this year.

The Hokies seemed destined to score on the final drive of the game. Not even the strange and eerie things that happen in the Tech-UVa series could have stopped it.

Coach Jimmy Sharpe described it succinctly: "We got started too late."

If the tie with the Walloos-ratied among the nation's worst teams—is not to be a notice to that portion of the college football world that hasn't seen the Hokies that Tech is on the same level, the Hokies can't afford to enter next Saturday's game at Richmond as offensively flat as they seemed to be for this one.

The Spiders, mired in a thudball season, doubtless will still be up for Tech as they were when they handed the visitors a shutout loss last year.

Whether the manner of Tech's comeback to avoid a loss provided a preview of a livelier offense in the weeks to come won't be known for a few more Saturday afternoons. It's a fact that timely passes from Lambie to Ellis Savage and other skilled receivers played a large part in the late-game effort that kept Tech from suffering college football's ultimate embarrassment, a loss to Virginia.

With the likes of Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida State and newly-wonning VMI still ahead, the Hokies still have not put more than 20 points on the board in one game, and did that only once, against Memphis State.

The forward pass, which rose to new heights in Hokieville in the quarterback days of Don Strock, went into a kind of hibernation after that time. When Tech put its emphasis on the pass in the closing four minutes against Virginia it paid off to the extent that it could out last in the game with Tech behind 14-6.

Sharpe, when asked at the post-game press conference whether Tech would pass the ball more against Richmond next Saturday said, "We'll do whatever we have to do to win." A good guess is that going to the air will be one of those things.

Turnovers, a major problem this season, continued to plague the Hokies Saturday, shooting down Tech as the Starship Enterprise would shoot down an erring asteroid hurling its way.

Sharpe's immediate mission (possible) is to get his team ready and even enthused about playing the Richmond Spiders who dwell in that portion of the void that also includes Virginia. The Spaders won't have a home field advantage since Tech played its best game so far and scored its only win at City Stadium.

Virginia's best hope for the future (and at this point the only certain that can be said about the Walloos future is that it lies ahead) may be its youth. Tightend Mike Newhall of Virginia Beach made some good catches and was hard to pull down and flanker Greg Taylor showed speed and had some good offensive moments. Both are freshmen.

Mark, a junior, has one more year of eligibility remaining, and Brian Shumock, the number one quarterback earlier in the season, is a freshman.

Saturday's game wasn't Star Wars by any stretch and wasn't even a good Walloos-Hokies encounter until the closing moments.

The game, which was better than a loss but only in degree, may not have proved much. If it did, it is hoped that it proved that the Hokies, like the Enterprise, can travel when they go to the air.

Scholastic Scene

Blacksburg knew it was in a football game before it subdued stubborn George Wythe, which made a bid for what would have been the New River upset of the year.

Missed opportunities and turnovers hurt Christiansburg which lost to Giles.

Virginia Tech wasn't alone. Auburn also had a tie game in its first homecoming against New Castle.

Conratulations to the Shawswick Shawnees who beat the Fort Chiswell Pioneers Saturday (the game had been rained out Friday) for the first time ever in that rivalry.