Chip Mark was not a household name in southwest Virginia. But after Saturday’s junior quarterback was the most talked about individual in Hokieedom. After two and a half seasons on the bench, and playing behind two all-conference quarterbacks in Mark’s first five games, Mark was successful on ten of his 17 attempts. The team was averaging 32 yards per game passing, and Mark netted 119 through the air Saturday afternoon. His favorite target, tight end Mike Newhall, had caught just two passes, and on Saturday the two teamed up for four completions, on a 12-yard touchdown.

Mark played with the confidence of a two year regular, not a two year bench-warmer. He was calm in the pocket, and although he doesn’t possess a rifle arm, he was accurate with his tosses. In the second half he hit on five of six attempts before being injured in the fourth quarter. All in all, it was too bad for Hokie fans that Mark had to come out of the closet and into his own at the expense of Tech, but for him it had to be very gratifying.

Who Wants the Ball

Tech’s fumbling problem is getting ridiculous. Averaging 5.4 fumbles per game, Hokie ballcarriers are literally giving away opportunities to get points. Aside from times when a runner gets stripped of the ball, or the quarterback fumbles when trying to pass, there is no excuse for losing the football by a fumble. Concentration, or the lack of it, is the key to hanging onto, or losing the ball. Tech has shown unerring opportunities against Virginia, and have cost themselves more than one touchdown or field goal in the other games.

For Tech, from sandlot up, practices how not to carry the ball, and how to avoid fumbling the football. Coach Sharpe, in his post-game interview, said the Hokies practice a thousand times a week on how not to fumble, and he can’t explain why his runners have such a hard time handling the ball. Of course he can’t. He doesn’t run with it in the game, he can’t explain to his team when they get it. You can’t put it under your shirt and attach it to your arm under lock and key. All those alternatives would make it too easy.

One of the primary phases of the game, and concentration is all-important. If Tech ballcarriers carried their wallets like they do the football, they would all be broke.

Passing Looks Good

By falling behind 14-3, Tech was forced to pass Saturday, and the passing game looked good. David Lamie was nine for 17 on the day, and he was eight of 15 in the first half. More importantly, he was successful in five of six attempts during Tech’s final touchdown drive. He has become more confident each game in his passing abilities, and has proven that he has a strong accurate arm in the clutch.

On fourth and four at the Virginia 24, Lamie calmly spotted Ellis Savage at the Cavalier seven and drilled a pass that saved the drive and ultimately Tech’s pride.

Although the Tech staff has shunned the pass in favor of the running game, Coach Sharpe indicated after the Virginia game he might consider opening up the Tech offense earlier in this week’s game against Richmond. He said he would do whatever was necessary to win, which might mean they won’t wait until they are down to go to the air. Lamie mised his receivers well, going to five different men on the day. One pass to halfback Dennis Scott was good for 46 yards and a near touchdown had the speedster not been tripped up on the sideline.

Ellis Savage snared three, but the wide receiver was double covered most of the day, making it necessary to go to secondary receivers at times. Dickie Howley has shown to be a good man out of the backfield.

Freshman Ron Zolliker has shone on occasion, and with experience should become an excellent wide receiver. By adding some passing early in the game, the Hokies could open things up for the running game they seem to prefer. A few first down checks add a dangerous element in the offense that to date has been lacking. Rather than key on the run, defenses that have to respect the pass are forced to loosen up in the secondary, which can lead to a few more breakdowns.

Pass, Tech, pass.

Coles Moves Up

Roscoe Coles moved up to 34th place on the NCAA rushing list with his 91 yards Saturday, replacing O.J. in the standings. Although it is doubtful he will reach the coveted 4,000 yard figure, he will no doubt move up to one of the most notable figures that were carried a football for a college team.

Some of the men Coles should from out of their spots are Ollie Mattox, Ali Amache, Rob Lytle, Mike Garrett, and Orr Armstrong, which is an accomplishment the diminutive speedster from Virginia Beach should be noted for.

Coles had gained a game since the lidlifter with Texas A&M, and he will have to a few more games like that to get the Tech offense back on its feet and rolling again. Virginia played the option well, but Roscoe still gets credit, hacary.