Root Feels VPI Changes Attitude Towards W&M

D-P 9-29-76

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Virginia Tech appears to be looking at William and Mary this year as a "somebody" instead of a "nobody."

That's an opinion voiced by W&M Coach Jim Root at Tuesday's press luncheon in Williamsburg.

"We may not have been anybody for them to beat in the past, but I feel they think we are now," says the Tribe mentor.

It's true! The Gobblers haven't become too excited about the Indians in the past because they didn't think they needed to in order to win.

With the surprising Indians coming to Blacksburg with a 2-1 record and a near-upset over highly-regarded East Carolina, the Techmen know this won't be the same team that went 2-9 last year.

Coach Jimmy Sharpe's club even had trouble with the Tribe last season. It wasn't until thg fourth quarter that they could put the Indians away 24-7 in the Oyster Bowl.

"That was a turnaround point for us last year and this week's game gives us a chance to take one more step in the right direction," points out Root.

After "finding themselves" against the Sharpies, the Green and Gold outfit closed out the 1975 campaign with a victory over Virginia Military Institute, a narrow 21-17 loss to Colgate and a stunning 31-21 triumph over Southern Conference champion Richmond.

Though the Blacksburg brigade is rated a two-touchdown favorite, that doesn't seem to ruffle many feathers in the Tribe camp.

While Root tabs the game a "tossup," W&M strong safety Scott Hays feels "we can win."

Unquestionably, Root puts Virginia Tech in the same class with unbeaten East Carolina, but adds: "At this point the only thing that really worries me is our physical stature. We'd like to have a week off — not to prepare, but to get well."

Definitely out is defensive tackle Dave O'Neill and questionable are free safety Joe Agee, cornerback Keith Potts, tailback Jimmy Kruis and defensive end Bruno Schmalhofer.

"None of those guys practiced yesterday and they won't today," explains the W&M chief. "If they're not able to practice tomorrow (Wednesday), we'll probably leave them at home."

Kruis, the SC's leading rusher with

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an average of 113.7 yards a game, and Schmalhofer, who played a whale of a game against ECU, are both recovering from mild concussions.

"If Kruis is able to stand up, I expect he'll start against Tech . . . and I feel he'll be able to," concedes Root.

Though the Indians have yet to beat a Wishbone team the last five years, that doesn't seem to raise any pessimism.

"It's not that scary going against the Wishbone (of Tech's)," offers Hays, who was instrumental in shutting off ECU's same offensive attack on the corners. "I think our defense will be ready. We've had two weeks to prepare for the Wishbone."

The former Lafayette High star made life miserable for East Carolina quarterback Mike Weaver, held to a minus three yards rushing, and he hopes to corral Tech signal-caller Mitchael Barnes in the same manner.

The Indians have nothing but respect for Barnes.

"Barnes isn't noted for his running, but he ran for 43 yards to beat us last year," recalls Root. "He can also pick you apart with his passing."

The person the "Mean Green" defense is mainly concerned about is mercury-footed Roscoe Coles, regarded as an "exciting flasher that can make you look bad on any play" by Root.

Tight end Kenny Cloud, who grabbed two touchdown passes against the Pirates, is concerned with the Gobblers' defense and physical size.

"I can remember last year. They really hit you," emphasizes the sure-handed sophomore who enjoyed a fine day against Tech last season by catching three passes for 55 yards.

Root is exceptionally "high" on the Gobblers' defense, especially bruising linebacker Rick Razzano and tackle Tom Beasley. He was especially impressed with their performance against Texas A&M.

"If it hadn't been for A&M's stinking fullback, it could have been a 0-0 game," he says.

The Indians have gained some respect, but they'll want more than that Saturday. There's nothing that can take the place of a victory, especially against rival Tech.