Bestwick: 'We Must Have Ground Game'

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Even though the Virginia Tech pass coverage has been greatly decimated by injuries, University of Virginia coach Dick Bestwick still feels that the Cavaliers will have to establish a running game to win Saturday's clash, the 58th meeting of the two state rivals.

Getting outside offensively, and containing the corners defensively may never be as important to the two teams again as it will be Saturday. Last week Tech added George Heath to its backfield to block on the corners so Roscoe Coles could spring into action. The strategy worked well.

Virginia's biggest problem last weekend was getting beat on the corners, dropping its fifth in a row this season.

VIRGINIA'S DICK BESTWICK
Hopes To End 13-Game Losing Streak

Incidentally, the Cavaliers have the longest losing streak in the nation with 13 consecutive losses.

"Our problem is not lack of effort," says head coach Dick Bestwick. "We're making some mental mistakes, but mostly it's a case of getting beat on the corners.

"We haven't the speed to protect out there and we can't attack there offensively for the same reason."

Defensively that could pose a very special problem against Tech's wishbone offense if it is clicking the way it did last Saturday against VMI. Tech set a Tobbacco Bowl record of 372 yards rushing in that game and didn't attempt a pass.

"Sure, we'll just have to stop them on the corners," said the former Georgia Tech assistant who knows the potential of a wishbone offense when it's working smoothly.

"Tech has good backs in (George) Heath and (Roscoe) Coles and (Paul) Adams is a very stout fullback. Their quarterback Mitcheal Barnes is a threat too."

It doesn't concern Bestwick that Tech didn't throw any passes last week. "It doesn't really bother me, because I know that they're capable of passing well. They've completed over 50 per cent of their passes this year.

"You can't really count last week that much any way because of the way the wind was in City Stadium."

Barnes has completed 14-of-26 for 169 yards this season.

Bestwick said he was unaware of Tech's injury problem in the secondary. Injuries have depleted the Hokies and newcomers will have to fill in experienced or not (see related story).

"I didn't know that they had anyone injured," he said. "We'll throw if we can. But I hope we don't have to. It's a difficult order to run on Tech with their inside people and linebackers, but we'll just have to find a way.

"We'll do whatever it takes to win," said the first year UVa mentor.

Virginia had a successful passing game against Georgia Tech two weeks ago, but that was reduced considerably last week when South Carolina shutdown the Cavs to 79 yards through the air and 117 yards rushing, in a 35-7 licking.

Bestwick is counting on the running game. "We'll have to establish some sort of a running game. Like I said, it will be difficult against their inside people and their linebackers, but we'll try.

"We'll have to threaten the corners with our veer."

Although Tech is an independent, the game will count as a conference contest for the Cavaliers by choice, something all ACC schools are having to contend with this season due to scheduling.

But that won't have any added effect. "Virginia Tech is special enough alone. You don't need anything else to make it a big game," noted Bestwick.

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Tech has had its problems lately, however many of those may have been erased against VMI. "I would hope that we can play well enough against them to make a game of it," Bestwick said modestly.

"Gee, Tech was picked to go 9-2 or 8-3 and we're picked as the worst team in the country (Bottom Ten). I just hope we play with enough to make it interesting."

Bestwick reminded, "Tech has only played one game poorly, and that was against William & Mary when crucial penalties hurt them severly. Otherwise they would be 4-1, which is what they anticipated they would be at this time."