Charlie Coffey Cries

For His Serving Kids

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Charlie Coffey sat down hard — it was almost a fall — on his poorly covered bench, grease stains of two garbage cans and a lid. Tears obstructed his vision as he opened his mouth to speak but couldn't find the words.

Only moments before the final siren had sounded, ending Virginia Tech's latest failure, a 27-15 loss to nationally ranked Florida State.

Coffey, huddled around Coffey, waiting for him to expound on what had taken place on this steamy Saturday afternoon, probably couldn't understand the emotion. Tech was supposed to win, and therefore the loss was not totally unexpected. And, really, there were so many good things, so much improvement over the last two weeks, that for Coffey, at least, it was a good loss. It was almost like winning.

But those close to Coffey understand. His emotion was not for himself. Few expected Tech to challenge FSU, but it did. The Hokies could have, easily, won the football game.

Coffey is coaching a team on which there is not a player who has ever won a college football game in the month of September. "My football team deserves better," Coffey said. "One of these days we're going to blow somebody's (emerson) out of the stadium. But we just haven't had any success and when you don't have success, you don't have confidence. We need to win a football game in the worst way. We need the confidence it would give us."

When you start talking about confidence, emotion, pride and all of those nickie words, you lose me. But when you talk about football and if you had seen those kids play Saturday you would realize that a victory is all that is needed. There was no similarity in the team which met Florida State and the team which lost to Virginia a week ago.

"I wish I could have a magic wand," Coffey said, "but that is ridiculous. We got into this thing. We'll have to get ourselves out of it."

Tech was improved in almost every area.

The pass protection was much better," said Tech quarterback Don Strock. "I don't mind getting knocked down — if I don't get knocked down one way (passing) I'll get knocked down another (running)." But we have a lot better chance if I have time to pass.

The pass rush was better, too. Rich Easterling, the sophomore defensive end, made some mistakes, but he kept the heat on Gary Huf. Tech appears ready for a win, but the schedule is not in the Hokies' favor. Southern Methodist is the opponent for the Tech home opener this week and the Hokies coaches believe SMU is better than Florida State.

SMU may have the fastest offensive backfield in the country and freshman running back Mike Green runs a 4.6 speed. Freshman Wayne Morris runs the 100 in 6.4. And Tech doesn't have anybody who can come close to catching either one.

The word successful is a key one. If Tech, can, by any means, become successful against SMU there is no reason not to have a good season. And, after whitening the improvement last Saturday, the feeling here is that exactly what is going to happen.