By BILL CATE
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The Virginia Tech football managers were passing out the orange jerseys before the Florida State game last week. They handed Paul Adams No. 23, the same number he wore in high school.

Adams' eyes got about the size of a baseball. He walked over to Tech head coach Charlie Coffey and said, "Hey, coach. I feel like the black ghost again."

"The Black Ghost" is not a name Adams gave himself. That's what they call him at Castlewood High School, where he used to disappear from the defenders while on the way to a touchdown.

Now people are calling Adams other things. Like great. Like superb.

Adams, as a freshman fullback at Virginia Tech, is already commanding the attention from those who buy players.

Last Saturday at Tallahassee there must have been a dozen pro scouts who came to see the Gary Huff-Don Strock show. Blanton Collier, the ex-Cleveland Brown coach, was sitting with another scout and watching Strock through binoculars.

About that time, Strock handed the ball to Adams and "The Black Ghost" ran 13 yards up the middle, knocking down four would-be tacklers.

"Good God," exclaimed Collier. "Who's that guy?"

Don Henning, the former Tech offensive coordinator who was in Tallahassee to scout the Houston Oilers, says Adams is as good as any young running back he's ever seen.

"He's great now," Henning says, "but if he doesn't get hurt, by the time he's a junior he'll be phenomenal."

What makes Paul Adams so good? He's fast, but not blazin' fast. (He's faster than the two Miami Dolphin running backs, Klick and Ceneka.)

Motivation is one of those two-for-a-nickle words. If you don't have anything else, maybe you've got motivation. But, more than anything else, motivation is the reason Paul Adams is Tech's starting fullback. When he finally is tackled, he comes up faster than he goes down. That's motivation.

"I used to play defense," Adams says, "and when I'd see a running back jump up after he had been tackled, I knew he hadn't been hit hard enough. I like to hit them harder than they hit me."

"Paul Adams is extremely motivated," says Tech offensive coordinator Wally English. "He's very strong, tough and as any other new player he's had some difficulty grasping the total offense. He has outstanding ability."

"But the reason he is playing is motivation. He is not that much better physically than Coyner (Doug, the second-unit fullback,) or John Dobbins. He's a little faster and a little stronger, but football is very important to him. He lays it on the line every snap. He plays as hard as he can all the time."

"He's a very mature player for a freshman and he has all the physical traits to be a great player. If his attitude continues like it is now, by the time he gets out of here he's going to be a great running back."

English says the Tech coaches haven't done anything to inspire Adams.

"He was that way when he came here," English said. "He's a self-motivated individual. That's what all the great ones have. I've had a chance to be around some of those guys. For example, John Unitas, as long as I've known him, has always been the first guy on the field and the last guy off and every time he throws a bad pass it upsets him."

Adams spent all summer motivating himself, and for a very good reason.

"I didn't expect to even start on the freshman team," he says. "With all those guys like Sandy Johnson and Don Testerman that Tech recruited, I figured I'd be spending a lot of time on the bench."

"But I came ready to play. They gave me a chance and, you know, I kind of like it."