Tech Has Talent

Last season, quarterback Don Strock provided almost three-fourths of Virginia Tech's offense, 3,234 of the Gobblers' total 4,527 yards. But if opponents expected Tech to fold with the graduation of the NCAA passing leader, they'd better take another look.

The Gobblers, in their third season under former Arkansas assistant Charlie Cofer, return a backup quarterback (Bruce Arians), the top three 1972 rushers (James Barber, Paul Adams and Rodney Schnurr), the top two pass receivers (Ricky Scales and Barber) and a host of promising young talents. And despite a backbreaking schedule, Tech can realistically hope to better last season's 6-4-1 record.

Key man in Gobbler plans is Arians, who threw only 13 times (completed five for 160 yards, two TDs) as Strock's backup in 1972. Arians, Tech coaches say, is an adequate passer, but a better runner than the departed star, giving the Hokies an additional offensive threat.

The running back situation appears set with Barber, a two-year letterman who galloped for 624 yards in the pass-oriented VPI attack, and veterans Adams and Schnurr. Pushing the veterans will be sophomores Phil Rogers, who was the leading ground-gainer in the spring game, and Anthony Hirston, a Martinsville product with limitless potential.

Graduation robbed the Gobblers of most of its top pass receivers, including split ends Craig Valentine and Donnie Reel and tight end Mike Burnop. The leading receiver, Ricky Scales of Martinsville, returns, however, and Tech officials figure the sure-handed speedster as a solid All-America candidate. Steve Galloway, also a letterman, is expected to fill the other wide receiver post.

Newcomers Skip Creasley and Kevin Dick will battle for the tight end spot.

The offensive line returns starters in center Rod Sedwick, tackles Tom Reynolds and Bruce Lemmert and guard Pete Horosko.

The defense, rebuilt in the line and in the secondary, is led by Tommy Shirley, the Gobblers' second All-America candidate. Shirley, a 6-2, 233-pound Roanoke (Patrick Henry High) grad, is a junior.

Joining Shirley in the linebacking corps are '72 starters Dennis Dodson and Kent Henry. Junior Jack Booth and sophomore Jack Crews (ex-Halifax County) will fight for the fourth linebacker position.

Leading pass interceptor Jerry Scharnus and starter Howard Keyes return in the secondary, while they will be aided by '72 reserves John Bell and David Halstead.

Larry Bearekman and Jim Heizer are the returning starters in the defensive line, but Chuck Perdue (ex-defensive back) has been moved in to bolster the forward wall. Juniors Allen Bledsoe and Charles Martin and sophes Mike Enzlow, Larry Herndon, Bob Seal, Doug Thacker and Tom Turner are other candidates.

Dave Strock, brother of Don, also graduated, leaving a void in the Tech kicking game. But '72 redshirt Wayne Latimer kicked seven field goals (longest 39 yards) in the spring game to solve that problem.