Gobblers have new look

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — Virginia Tech averaged more than 300 yards per game passing last year on the arm of quarterback Don Strock. But there'll be a new look to the Gobblers' football offense this season.

Strock, essentially a dropback thrower who led the nation in passing and total offense, has graduated, and Coach Charlie Coffey will replace him with two youngsters who'll throw more on the run.

Battling for the starting spot are Bruce Arians, a 190-pound junior who saw some backup action last year, and Rick Popp, a 175-pound redshirt sophomore.

"Either gives us more running threat than we've had during the last two years," says Coffey.

James Barber, a 190-pound senior who led the Gobblers on the ground with 624 yards, returns. So does the No. 2 ground gainer, Paul Adams, a 215-pound sophomore.

But the boy to watch is Phil Rogers, a 180-pound sophomore who's a breakaway threat every time he gets his hands on the ball. Another top prospect is junior college transfer Alex Hill.

With Strock gone, plus five of last year's top seven receivers, "and a question mark for an offensive line, we've worked hard to rebuild our offensive line," says Coffey.

"Wide receiver Ricky Scales should rate in the super category, and with Scales and Steve Galloway we are all right for skill at the wide spots," Coffey adds.

Scales is a speedy 176-pound junior who led the Gobblers last season with 43 receptions for 826 yards and seven touchdowns. Like Rogers, he could go all the way on any given play. Barber caught 35 passes and Galloway, a 180-pound junior, grabbed 10 for 247 yards.

The Gobblers also lost their kicking specialists, Dave Strock and Andy Hromyak. Strock kicked 28 of 30 extra point tries and 15 of 23 field goal attempts. Hromyak averaged 41.4 yards on 42 punts.

Replacing them will be a pair of impressive sophomores, Wayne Latimer in the place-kicking department and Bruce McDaniel punting.

Eight starters return on defense, led by 233-pound junior linebacker Tom Shirley and 187-pound senior safety Jerry Scharns, who picked off five enemy passes and averaged 8.8 yards on 26 punt returns.

After a 4-7 record in his first year, Coffey upped Tech's mark to 6-4-1 in his second season, but he's not predicting that much improvement recordwise this year.

The schedule:
Sept. 8, William and Mary; 15, at Kentucky; 22, at West Virginia; 29, at Southern Methodist.
Oct. 6, South Carolina; 12, at Houston, night; 20, Virginia; 27, at Alabama, night.
Nov. 3, at Memphis State, night; 10, Florida State; 17, Virginia Military.