Charlie Coffey Says Scharnus 'Underrated'

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Virginia Tech's offensive quarterback job is up for grabs, but the "quarterback" of the defensive secondary is and will remain safetyman Jerry Scharnus.

"If every player on our squad were as consistent a performer as Scharnus, we'd be in excellent shape," Coach Charlie Coffey says, adding, "He's as underrated as any player I know."

Scharnus always has been extremely high on Tech's list, but last Saturday's scrimmage in which Scharnus made 18 tackles, had seven assists and was one of very few bright spots served as another reminder of his worth.

"If we had been playing our opening game, we would have been embarrassed. We had maybe half a dozen players with winning grades. As usual, one of those was Scharnus."

A 5'11 1/2, 185, senior from Newport News, Scharnus unquestionably is Tech's finest safety since All America Frank Loria. He has quickness and savvy and is the surest open field tackler on the squad.

"When we want to demonstrate perfect tackling during a drill, we use Scharnus," Coffey notes.

The Tech coach also might have added that when Tech wants to make sure that a punt is caught in a tight situation Scharnus draws the assignment. "At first he was used because of his sure-handedness," Coffey points out. "But as the season wore on last year he not only caught the ball but he developed into a real threat as a returner."

Scharnus was an offensive quarterback in high school (even though his secret ambition was to be a wide receiver), but he's long since been happy just to be playing, even if it means "quarterbacking" again.

A FRESHMAN with the "bighead" is nothing new to football at any level, but Tech spent a whole week trying to cope with a literal big head problem.

Keith Gibson, a freshman lineman from Churchill, Tenn., requires an 8½ helmet, and helmet manufacturers didn't have an immediate solution to the problem. But senior offensive lineman Bruce Lemmert and Reid Arrington, Tech's equipment man, got their heads together, and Gibson now is properly helmeted.

Lemmert, who wears a 7½, suggested the solution was in finding the right size liner, and Arrington finally found a liner half the width of the ordinary liner.

The helmet shell Gibson wears is appropriately named, "Gladiator."

Gibson, 6-3, 265, is making a strong bid with the Tech varsity as offensive left guard. If he makes it, he could find himself playing next to Lemmert, starting left tackle.

Asked about such problems in the past, Arrington noted that Tech has had several players who required 7½ headgears. Most recent was lineman Jim Lawlor who finished his career last season.

A NEAR SELLOUT for the Virginia game is leading a sudden surge in Tech's 1973 football ticket sales.

With less than 2,000 tickets remaining for the October 20 contest against the Cavaliers, the game is virtually assured of being a sellout and Tech officials already are making plans for additional bleachers.

Tech's season ticket sales are higher than ever before, and in recent days there also has been increased demand for the South Carolina game (homecoming, Oct. 6) and the annual battle with Florida State (Nov. 10).

Although most orders have been by phone (951-6731) or mail (Box 158, Blacksburg 24061), window sales have picked up sharply since the ticket office in the lobby of the Coliseum has resumed in-season hours: 8:30 a.m. straight through to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:30 to noon on Saturday.

Tech tickets also will be available again this year through Ticketron outlets throughout the state.

Tech's Sept. 8 opener against Wm & Mary here in Lane Stadium offers an exceptional opportunity to fans because the university is not in session and most of the good seats in the student section (east side) are available to the general public.

In addition to home games (Wm & Mary, Sept. 8, South Carolina, Oct. 6; Virginia, Oct. 20; Florida State, Nov. 10; and VMI, Nov. 17), Tech has a limited number of tickets for each of the away games. Of those, the ones at Kentucky, Sept. 15, and at West Virginia, Sept. 22, are selling exceptionally well.