"I'M WAITING for the cream to rise to the top," Coffey admitted his squad last week, and it wasn't long until one of the Fighting Gobblers, James Barber, answered the challenge.

Sophomore Professor Rogers was Tech's only consistent runner, and some newcomers suddenly have given the running corps a look of competence and confidence, but "J.B." has no intention of enduring the third-string status assigned him at the opening of practice.

In the Gobblers' first scrimmage he served ample notice that he is "cream" by ripping for 82 yards, including a td, in 11 carries.

"I'm happy that we have better competition than ever for the running back jobs, but I've won a place under the physical condition I've been in my college career and I intend to play," J.B. evaluates the situation.

A 6-foot, 200-pound senior from Charlotte, N.C., Barber has been the Gobblers' busiest running back for the last two years. Chances are good that he'll be the leader again.

But even if all of Spring practice because he was recovering from off-season knee surgery, so he wasn't surprised or chagrined by his third-team start last fall, but he wasn't about to let it set that way.

Barber is a cinch to break at least a couple of Tech records and to establish himself alongside Dickie Beard, Sonny Uy, Bob Schweickert and Terry Smoot as Tech's most productive running backs of the last quarter century.

"You'd expect James to be one of the top five to meet the challenge. Coffey says. "He's been among the cream for two years for us, and I'd be greatly surprised if he weren't again."

"WE'RE LOOKING at the horizon when our sights should be aimed high in the sky," Coach Carl Brickley told his squad in evaluating progress so far of his 1973 Virginia Tech football team.

"I'm not talking about wins or losses; they'll take care of themselves, he hastened to add. "What I mean is that the physical potential we have on our team should be driving itself to more pronounced progress.

"Our physical conditioning for example, has been coming along well. We should be farther along than it's confident that we have enough players to pay the price to succeed, but too far too many of them haven't accomplished it.

"Physical condition precedes mental toughness, and discipline precedes morale. When we get those things to the level we think they should be, we'll feel that we're ready to play to our potential."