Tech's kicking game gets brand new look

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It's a whole new game when it comes to kicking this fall for Virginia Tech.

Dave Strock has graduated, gone to the pros and been cut as a place kicker. Andy Hromyak has also graduated after finishing with an injury that sidelined him from punting during the waning days of the 1972 season.

Now Bruce McDaniel, who should have succeeded Hromyak last year, will handle the punting and Wayne Latimer will do the placekicking.

Both were recruited by Tech for their special abilities with their feet.

Actually, McDaniel should have been doing the punting last year when Hromyak went out. But McDaniel, on his third punt, was hit by an Alabama player and he broke his left leg.

"It taught me to catch the ball," said McDaniel, who didn't jump high enough for a bad snap. "But it was wet," he continued with a trace of a laugh.

McDaniel can smile about it now. He admits his leg has healed over the summer. Now the sophomore from Beckley, W. Va., is ready to try to average 45 yards for Tech.

"I came here as a kicking specialist," said McDaniel, who was a 180-pound defensive end in high school. Size eliminated him from playing that position at Tech.

"I wanted to placekick, but Wayne has the edge. I didn't like it. But Wayne and I are still good friends," said McDaniel.

Still, placekicking may have gotten Bruce back into shape for this year's schedule, which opens a week from Saturday when William and Mary comes to Blacksburg.

"This summer I practiced placekicking. It was one way to help my punting by keeping my muscles strong," McDaniel explained.

The sophomore would like to try the pros, but that's a long way in the future. "People think it's easy to kick," he said. "Anybody can kick, but to be a good one or great one is something else. I don't want to be just an average kicker."

Latimer, a redshirt sophomore, has no intention of trying out as a punter. "I was recruited as a placekicker and that's all," he said.

Latimer has hit 60-yarders in practice, but he won't say that he can necessarily match that in game conditions.

Actually he almost never made it to Tech or any other school as any kind of a kicker.

"I played football in junior high," he related. "Then I quit until I was a senior. I never figured I would play college ball."

But his coach at Meadowbrook in Richmond saw him kick and got Latimer out during his senior year.

"I guess I was too lazy to play, really," he reflected. "I worked in my junior year. There was no big reason."

One year as a kicker. And he earned a scholarship at Tech and will now succeed Strock, the top placekicker in Tech's history.

"I'm surprised. When I started over in my senior year I never thought I would play college ball," he said.

What about his future? "A future in the pros would be nice," Latimer agreed. "But it's not something you can count on. If it comes I'd like to play."

All this is two years away. Tech's kicking in the near future seems to be settled for awhile.