Tech's Charlie Coffey

Coffey Looks For Success

BLACKSBURG (U P )—Charlie Coffey enters his third season as head football coach at Virginia Tech hoping to continue the momentum towards a quality program but with the problem of replacing Don Strock, the nation's leading passer last year.

"When you lose the number one quarterback in the nation you obviously have some rebuilding to do," Coffey says.

Coffey, holding his first head coaching job, guided the Hokies to a 6-4-1 record last year following a 4-7 mark his first season. Last year was the first since 1968 that Tech won more games than it lost.

"I'd certainly like to think that we can show as much improvement in 1973 as we did between 1971 and 1972 but I won't predict that will happen," Coffey said.

Besides losing Strock to graduation, Tech must replace several of its top seven receivers so Coffey will have his hands full in coming up with an effective passing attack.

Following spring practice, Coffey said he planned to start either Bruce Arians or Rick Popp as quarterback. Arians was the backup for Strock.

Arians is described as having "adequate tools as both runner and passer, although passing mechanics need further refinement."

Popp, was severely hampered through the last half of spring practice with a shoulder injury but he is well now. Tech coaches predict that he will improve as he gains confidence.

Coffey said the Tech offense will have more of a running threat with either Popp or Arians than it has had in the past.

A major question facing Coffey is both defensive and offensive interior line play, where graduation will force him to use primarily untired and younger players. Coffey plans to take a special look at his freshmen to see if any will be able to aid the team right away.

Sophomore running back Phil Rogers is expected to anchor the Tech running game. He took over the number one tailback job early in spring practice and gained more than 150 yards in all but one scrimmage.

Tech opens at home Sept. 8 against William and Mary. The Hokies will be seeking to avenge a 17-16 upset loss last year to the Indians in Richmond's Tobacco Bowl.