Coffey worried; Root ready for opening battle

By Bob McLelland

Charlie Coffey admits he is a very concerned coach. But he also is a coach with confidence in his team, even though he is worried about the unknown.

Coach Jim Root says he feels much better than he did last year. He claims he has a much better football team.

Both coaches report that they and their squads are eager to get on with the business at hand.

The business at hand is an important opening football game tomorrow night between the Hles at 1:30 in Blackbuck's Lane Stadium that will match Coffey's Virginia Tech squad against Root's Indians from William and Mary.

The odds will favor the Techmen a bit despite the fact W&M returns 15 starters from a team that upset Tech 17-16 last year in the mud in Richmond.

"Early games are just not won," Coffey said. "I'm working with a lot of inexperience. But I have confidence we're going to have some good players on this team. In fact, we've got some good ones right now.

"I'm worried because I might expect too much. But until you have seen people react under the pressure of critical game situations, you never know."

Coffey calls W&M a "damn good football team." He said they had to have 18 returning starters from a team that averaged 265 yards rushing last year. "I look at Tech and ... you have to be good. I don't care who you play," he said.

James Barber, a senior fullback, has drawn praise from Coffey for the way he has reacted in fall practice. Paul Adams, the backup man at the position, has exercised more effort and is beginning to know what the starters are all about, according to Coffey.

Tailback Phill Rogers is the fellow who has Root the most concerned. Root caught Rogers' act in the spring game and said, "Anyone who wasn't impressed just doesn't know a football player when he sees one."

"He's a weighty runner ... ," said Coffey. "What will it take for Tech to win?"

"It can't give up the football on our side of the field and we have to put some points on the board every time we get inside their 30. And we can do it. We've got a kicker (Wayne Lammers) who can hold it in there if we don't make the first down."

There are a few aging Gobblers and at least one of them is expected to gain the action. Defensive back Howard Keys has a neck injury and will be replaced by Lynn McCoy. Wide receiver Steve Galloway has a hip pointer and will not start in favor of Billy Harmon.

Linebackers Tom Shirley and Charlie Martin have had temperatures this week and may be used as safeties.

Root had an optimistic physical report from W&M. He said all the Indians were ready.

He said two things made him realize the Indians were more determined and eager this season. One—They all reported back in top physical shape and, two—The team didn't lose a player due to academic troubles. "This shows they are all out for a winning season and they all want to be a part of it," said Root. "And man, I'm glad I have them."

Quarterback Bill Deery could be the key factor in the game. He operates the option offense of W&M and is the team's top runner as well as a passing threat. "Bill has had a super fall," said Root. "He's got me convinced," said Coffey. Tech's quarterback will be either Rick Popp or Bruce Arias. Both have been seeing

Phil Rogers — Tech threat
equal duty in practice but Coffey said he will pick a starter and hopes he has made the right choice.

"I'd like to think the same one will start every game," Coffey said. "But, regardless, I plan to play them both the first half tomorrow and in the rest of the games. I want to keep them both actively involved in the offense."

"I think the rest of our offensive people have confidence in them both."

Root has been impressed with many of his Indians this fall. But he had a special pat on the back for Steve Dallen, a 6-3, 210-pound sophomore defensive end; Bill Stockey (6-2, 235) and Rich Hudson (6-3, 250), a pair of senior defensive tackles; Mark Blackmorr, a 6-3, 180-pound safety; and Frank Prochilo, a 250-pound tailback.

Root said Tech has superb scoring potential! He thinks the key to the game, from the W&M standpoint, will be the Indians' ability to control Rogers and the rest of the Tech runners. Both coaches rate the game as a truly big opener. Coffey realizes it's a must if Tech is to continue its bid to become the football power in the state. Root realizes it's big because he and his Indians would like a little lump of the limelight for themselves.