They have opposite ideas

BLACKSBURG—Sometimes you have to wonder which comes first . . . the football team or the big build up.

Virginia Tech and William and Mary have opposite philosophies as to how to get the job done.

Charlie Coffey came to Tech three years ago and stirred up a record amount of enthusiasm, interest and alumni support. Tech probably has generated as much spirit among its alumni during the past three years as any team in the country.

Meanwhile, Jim Root is starting his second season as the head man at William and Mary, where interest, support and enthusiasm are running far behind Blacksburg.

But Root has two big pluses in his corner. He has beaten Tech two straight seasons and he did it with a relatively limited amount of scholarship aid and alumni support.

Root said he has some 82 football players in his program—counting his freshmen. But all of these aren’t on athletic scholarship and some are only receiving partial scholarships.

He brought in 18 on scholarship his first year and still has 16 in uniform. Another is returning to school next semester. This fall, he has 24 freshmen on scholarship.

The numbers at Tech are far superior with nearly 150 involved in the program and all but a few of that number on full scholarship.

Tech’s facilities have grown to a point where they rank with the best in the nation. Those at W&M are lagging. Cary Field will hold only 16,000 fans.

Root admits he would like to see the stadium enlarged. But he feels a seating capacity of 25,000 or 30,000 would prove sufficient.

Root knows the job to do

Root calls himself a “realist.”

“I know what can be done here and I know what the president and school told me we could do,” Root explained. “I think it’s up to me and my staff to do the best possible with what we have. When we do this, we’ll generate enough interest and support from our alumni to enlarge our program.

“I don’t think there is any limit on what we can do. We can play with the best in Group I in the NCAA. It’s up to us. We do the job and we’ll get the tools to build and enlarge.”

Root also feels the NCAA is on the right track in limiting scholarships to 30 a year. This would mean 120 in school, minus the loss for academics and other reasons.

“The secret is quality recruiting,” Root said. “. . . not quantity. I know a lot of coaches will disagree with me but that’s how I feel. Everyone is entitled to his own feeling.”

A little bit of both

This may sound like an ideal athletic situation and it’s great to hear a coach speak in such an honest manner. But it’s hard for me to take it all 100 per cent.

But there are times when I think maybe Tech is going a bit overboard on the number of scholarships it awards.

There could be something more realistic between the two philosophies.

You have to do some talking to generate enthusiasm around a team. The question of building a winner before you have the facilities is another point of discussion. There are arguments for both sides. And maybe that’s the way it should be. It would be a mighty dull thing if everyone in collegiate athletics thought the same way and did the same things.

Everyone should do what he thinks is best and what he can sell his alumni on.

But right now, Root has at least two good points in his favor. 1. He lost last year. 2. A much more enjoyable 31-24 win here Saturday.

What happens in the future is yet to be decided.