Defensive changes

Tech has new faces

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ROANOKE — Virginia Tech goes again against another rugged and experienced offensive line tomorrow afternoon at Kentucky and Gobbler defensive chief George McKinney is expected to make a few shuffles in his lineup to meet the assault.

McKinney certainly doesn’t want any more games like last week when William and Mary’s offensive line pushed the Tech defenders around and helped the Indians to a stunning 31-24 upset.

There could be at least four new faces in the starting defensive unit for Tech. Jim Heizer, who is still recovering from an ankle injury, might replace Billy Linson at right end. This was one spot that proved weak against W. & M.

Charlie Martin, who has played about everywhere for Tech, will be moved from middle linebacker to right tackle to strengthen this spot. Replacing Martin at linebacker will be Jack Booth, who was a second unit man last week.

Dennis Dodson has moved ahead of Kent Henry at weak side linebacker as has Lou Smith ahead of Lynn McCoy at right corner.

Despite the fact he isn’t listed as a starter, Henry, a Kentucky native, will serve as game co-captain along with offensive tackle Bruce Lemmert.

Rick Popp is expected to again open at quarterback with Bruce Arians in relief. Despite some comment from the fans concerning the long passing abilities of the two, both Tech head coach Charlie Coffey and the Kentucky scouts were impressed with Popp and Arians.

“Popp is a dangerous man with the ball in his hands,” said Kentucky assistant Billy Mitchell, who formerly was an aide at Tech. “He is elusive and a quick thinker. He presents problems. Arians is a better passer and the two of them give Tech a pair of top college quarterbacks.”

Another thing that concerns Kentucky is the “other skilled” players in the Tech lineup. Runner James Barber and Phil Rogers, along with wide receivers Ricky Scales, Billy Hardee and Steve Galloway are dangerous to any defense.

Coffey has been spending much time at Tech this week trying to get the Gobblers in the proper frame of mind for the game. But he admits he is puzzled as to just how to gauge such a condition.

“I thought we were better prepared for William and Mary than for any game since I came here,” Coffey said. “But you just can’t take in account what happened ... fumbles, penalties and mental lapses. We’ll need a much more unified and mistake-free game to beat Kentucky.”

If Tech can’t spoil the stadium debut for the Wildcats, it could be a mighty long season for Coffey and his boys. They must go to West Virginia and Southern Methodist in their next two games before returning to Lane Stadium to entertain South Carolina.

West Virginia is at Maryland tomorrow afternoon and South Carolina faces Georgia Tech.

In other games with ACC teams, Duke is at Tennessee and Florida State at Wake Forest in two night tests.