Wildcat Sizeup Stumps
Coffey...Curci, Too

By JENNINGS CULLEY
Virginia Tech's Charlie Coffey says he's "in the dark" about Kentucky and out in Blue Grass country, they smile and say, "Join the crowd, Charlie."
Everybody, it seems, is in the dark about Kentucky.
This really is a "new" season for the football Wildcats.
They have a new stadium that will be dedicated on Saturday when the Hokies go to Lexington.
They have a new coach in Fran Curci who arrived in the dead of winter from Miami after a layover in Tampa.

NEW SYSTEM
And hopefully, they have a new system that will erase a losing image.

Only once in the 11 years since Blanton Collier pulled out and went off to the pros have the Wildcats had a football winner. In 1984, a Charlie Bradshaw team finished 6-4. But Bradshaw's 7-year record was 25-41-4 and Johnny Ray, who replaced him in 1989, had even less success—a record of 10 wins and 33 defeats.

Now young, handsome Curci who's had an affair with success most of his career has been entrusted with returning the Wildcats to the football glory days of the 1950s when Bear Bryant compiled an eight-year mark of 60-23-5.

But Curci, on the eve of his opener, sounds like everybody else.
"I have no idea about our team," Curci says. "None. I won't know anything until we play. I just don't have any idea what we're going to do."

For the record, the Wildcats are picked to finish dead last in the Southeastern Conference. But rivals figure Curci, who built a college division champion at Tampa, may turn the

"Cats around faster than the fans think.

The Wildcats have experience and talent in what coaches like to call the skilled positions.

They have returning from last year's squad their leading rusher (Sonny Collins, 502 yards), their leading pass catcher (Jack Alvarez, 41 passes for 487 yards), their leading punter (John Tatter- son) and their leading punt and kickoff return men (Steve Phillips and Steve Campassi).

But Curci, a standout collegiate quarterback himself at Miami in the late '50s, knows success usually depends on the quarterback and that spot is the 'Cats' biggest question mark now.

The top candidates are Ernie Lewis and Mike Fanuzzi. Lewis was used spottily last year as a freshman and got a starting assignment in the final game. He responded with 171 yards passing in a 17-7 loss to Tennessee.

Fanuzzi, a backup quarterback in '71, received a knee injur in pre-season practice last year and missed the entire season.

The Wildcats defense last year was the worst in the SEC, giving up an average of 348 yards a game. But Curci has switched from a four-man front to a five-man alignment that features Jim (Bubba) McCollum (5-11, 264) at middle guard.

"We have several uncertainties," Curci admits, "but nose-man isn't one of them. We're plenty sure about Bubba."

The Virginia Tech defense was the most disappointing aspect—to Coffey—of last week's 31-24 loss to William & Mary and defensive coordinator George McKinney admits to a certain doubt in preparing for Kentucky.

At Miami last year, Curci leaned to the run and used the Wishbone, Veer and I. In the spring game, the Wildcats passed a lot.

"We're serious when we say we're in the dark," Coffey said. "We'll have to expect most anything."