Coffey shuffles his Gobblers

Which Tech team will WVU play?

Which Virginia Tech football team will show up at Morgantown, W. Va., tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 to do battle with the explosive Mountaineers? This is a question that has WVU Coach Bobby Bowden a bit concerned. But Coach Charlie Coffey will have more at stake than just a win or a loss in a football game.

Coffey has played his trump card in his frantic bid to pull the Gobblers out of their doldrums and shake them into the kind of winning unit he feels they can be. He has taken the tough approach this week in practice and has made the announcement to his team (and overheard by reporters) that he was finished with anything less than 100 per cent effort. This was it, Coffey said and the game tomorrow is to be the proving grounds for his new approach to Tech football.

By BOB McLELLAND
Sports Editor

“He has played his trump card,” said one observer. “If his move this week doesn’t pay off... well, he’s in trouble. He has nothing else to pull and eight more games to play.”

Coffey said, “We think we have accomplished what he set out to accomplish in practice this week. Now we will just have to wait and see what happens.”

But the head Gobbler also added that he had some reservations about the game. He said practice Monday was marked by a new enthusiasm and spirit. Things fell off a bit Tuesday and began to drag Wednesday as the squad experienced the unusual event of three straight in-season practices in pads.

Yesterday was a light drill and the squad will only do some jogging and such today in Morgantown.

“I know they have been physically extended this week,” Coffey said. “We have had some bumps and bruises. Some will miss the game but they have been honest injuries—ones received by good, hardnosed practice sessions.

“The thing that concerns me more is the mentally attitude of the squad. It could be mentally drained. But I feel a lot better about our program. We laid it on the line and many of the kids rallied to our challenge.”

Then as a side note, Coffey asked, “Wonder why all those we demoted turned up either injured or sick?”

All of this has Bowden scratching his head. He is greatly concerned about how the Gobblers will react in game conditions to Coffey’s new approach. But he also realized that Tech played some solid football—at times—in its two opening losses.

“They fumbled and made enough mistakes to lose two games against William and Mary,” Bowden said. “But they still looked tough at times—especially on several touchdown drives. And at Kentucky, they piddled around the first half but were great in the second.

“Man, I don’t know what team Tech will play here. I sure hope it’s not the one that drove on William and Mary nor the one that played the second half at Kentucky.”

Coffey, as was expected, has numerous definite lineup changes. Some of the more notable ones are David Halstead at right cornerback, Billy Hardee and Randy Inge at wide receivers and Richard Arthur at right tackle on offense, where freshman Tom Beasley also will see action.

Defensive end Doug Thacker and linebacker Dennis Dodson have a hip pointer and neck injury, respectively, but should be able to play.

Tech used only two running backs in the opening two games—James Barber and Phil Rogers. Coffey said he could play Alex Hill, Greg Toal and Rodney Schmurr tomorrow, in addition to Barber and Rogers.

While Tech might be working itself into a psychological advantage, Bowden is quick to point out the advantage of his team’s playing at home.

“A home game might not mean much to some teams,” he said. “But it sure does for us. You get a packed house of wild Mountaineer fans yelling for you and it just does something. The players feel it. I know I do. It may not make me coach any better but it makes me feel I do. Our home field is worth at least seven points, I think.”

David Halstead... starts for Tech