Coffey Breaks In Joyce As Backup

By Bill Mason

Virginia Tech head football coach Charlie Coffey told the Blacksburg Sports Club at its regular meeting Monday that freshman quarterback Eddie Joyce, all-stater from Andrew Lewis High School, has been moved up to the varsity and former number two quarterback Bruce Arians has been placed in a reserve role.

Coffey listed his quarterbacks in 1-2-3 fashion as Rick Popp, redshirt soph from Akron, Ohio; Greg Mullinax, soph from Dalton, Georgia and Joyce. Arians, who has alternated with starter Popp in the first four games, will be ready to fill in when needed.

The coach compared the experience of wireless Tech with that of a man fishing in a leaky boat, whose main preoccupation is to keep from sinking, not to keep on fishing. He said that although hard practice has eliminated many errors, "We still give up the big play. We've lost momentum."

Coffey stated that he accidently reserve quarterback Steve Mathieson, injured while leading a Tech drive, was no accident. He said "Steve was on the ground when somebody squared him. Mathieson will miss the remainder of the season with a broken collarbone.

The coach said he had talked with some SMU coaches who felt that the Tarant of Texas Stadium was the worst surface they ever played on and SMU planned to move its games back to the Cotton Bowl next year. He spoke of dark and light areas of the open-top stadium and variations in wet and dry areas of the artificial surface.

Coffey praised the punting of Bruce McDaniel, who averaged about 49 yards against SMU and the place kicking of Wayne Latimer who "has his timing back."

Speaking of Joyce, he said: "We don't want to throw him into the fight too soon. He understands - our offense much better than he did a few weeks ago." He said Joyce still has some plays to learn.

He admitted that mistakes, including fumbles by quarterbacks and the team's leading rusher Phil Rogers have hurt, but added "Rogers is not a fumbler," and observed that fumbles have come when Rogers turned on the second effort for more yardage. A freshman will be moved up behind Rogers. Arians, he said, did not execute well against SMU.

The coach praised some freshmen who have received a baptism of fire. Keith Gibson, 6-3 235 offensive lineman from Church Hill, Tenn., "had some fine plays," as did linebacker Bill Housewright, 6-2 195 of Gate City, and 6-5 1/2 215 Tommy Beasley of Northfork, W. Va. Stuart Patterson, 6-1 170 defensive guard of Lynchburg and Curt Lowery, 6-1 218 linebacker of Virginia Beach provided needed help but "need more time" to develop. Coffey said that in practice "We've tried to force (Ricky) Scales and (Steve) Galloway to block," an assignment that has proved difficult for both receivers.

In a question and answer session, Coffey said that Joyce's recent neck injury in a practice session had not been serious and the neck harness Joyce had worn was removed last weekend. Coffey said Rogers, whom he termed "the best running back we've got" suffered a shoulder injury against SMU but should be ready to play against South Carolina on Saturday.

Fred Burtner gave the results of the football contest and commented that Southern California's tie with Oklahoma was not picked correctly by anyone.

Blacksburg High School's new head football coach Vester Newcomb was the club's guest at the speakers table.

Films of Virginia Tech-SMU highlights were shown to club members after the luncheon.