BLACKSBURG—There could be at least four freshmen in Virginia Tech's starting lineups for Saturday's homecoming game here against South Carolina as Coach Charlie Coffey grasps for a winning combination.

On the offensive unit, Tech will start a freshman tackle, Danny Patterson, 6-5, 260, from New Kent, as well as seven sophomores.

Freshman starters on defense include tackle Tommy Beasley, 6-5½, 217, from Elkhorn, WVa., end Bill Houseright, 6-2, 225, of Gate City, and linebacker Stuart Patterson, 6-1, 205, of Lynchburg. And three sophomores also are on the first defensive unit.

That's 14 of the first 22, and both kicking specialists, Bruce McDaniel and Wayne Latimer, also are sophomores.

"When you're 0-4, you have to figure that you have no way to go but up," Coffey said. "Of course, recent injuries have forced some of the moves, but we also believe that some of our youngest players have been developing and are now ready for a chance at varsity competition."

Among those waiting in the wings of the second unit are quarterback Eddie Joyce, 6-4, 180, from Salem, and running back Danny Ludd, 5-9, 180, from Baltimore, Md., via Massanutten Military.

Four seniors, tackle Bruce Lemmert, guard Pete Horoszko, center Rod Sedwick and fullback James Barber, add some stability to the offensive unit, but safetyman Jerry Scharnus is the only senior starter on defense. (Linebackers Dennis Dodson and Kent Henry are question marks due to injuries sustained last Saturday).

"If it looks like a youth movement, so be it," Coffey said. "We're looking for a winning combination."

Saturday's likely depth chart: two deep.