VPI's Hardee Is A Team Asset

Billy Hardee, the stylish sophomore receiver who is blossoming into a star at Virginia Tech, hails from the same high school as Tech tackle coach Carl Ellis and was recruited for the Gobblers by Ellis.

Hardee and Ellis hail from Mulberry, Florida and Carl, who played for the late General R.R. Neyland at Tennessee, slipped into the Sunshine State and plucked a good one from under the noses of Florida State and Miami.

"Several people were interested in him," recalls Ellis, "but I knew about him having played high school ball there and was fortunate enough to sign him." Ellis recruited many of the youngsters starting to sparkle at Tech as sophomores and his signees are among the best in camp. He is the man who got Phil Rogers, George Heath, Bill Houseright and numerous others who are future greats for the Gobblers.

While the Southwest Virginia Upper East Tennessee area is Ellis' recruiting ground, it's a feather in his cap to also land a couple from other states like Hardee.

Hardee lacks the true swiftness of some of Tech's other receivers, but he doesn't lack good moves and football instinct.

On the second play from scrimmage last Saturday Hardee got behind a South Carolina defender with a deep pattern, hauled in a pass from Rick Popp and turned it into a 74-yard bomb with a good initial move that kept him from being hauled down.

In the third quarter he returned a kickoff 96 yards, putting the Gobblers back in contention. It wasn't too surprising since he had almost broken two kickoff returns against West Virginia.

Usually he appears to shuffle until he spots an opening before he accelerates, but once he turns it on, he's exciting.

It's also not surprising that he's Tech's leading TD-maker this season with four and the leading receiver with 17 for 311 yards. Last year he led the JVs with 22 catches for 443 yards and four TDs. In his high school career at Mulberry he caught an even 100 aerials.