'Mulberry shuffle' hit at Tech

BLACKSBURG — The "Mulberry shuffle" is one of the "in" things with Virginia Tech football.

Billy Hardee, sophomore wide receiver from Mulberry, Fla., 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 Fighting 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.

"There's no question that Billy has added an exciting dimension to our passing game," Coach Charlie Coffey notes. "The most pleasing thing, however, is the way he keeps working to improve himself. And I'm sure that he's the first time as a punt returner. I expect him to develop into a fine one in that department, too."

Tech hasn't found the winning combination yet, but when it does there's no question that one of the main ingredients will be the Mulberry shuffle.