What a Spot for Tech's Joyce

"This is the best bunch I've been around."—Bear Bryant, Alabama coach

BY JERRY REED
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A Virginia Tech alumnus motioned to freshman quarterback Eddie Joyce in the locker room last Saturday.

"It's on your shoulders now, son," was his message.

Joyce entered the game against Virginia with eight minutes remaining and it appears he will stand over the center through the remainder of the season. A replacement for sophomore Ricky Popp, who sustained torn ligaments in his knee, Joyce climaxed the 27-15 win with a three-yard touchdown run in the last minute and six seconds.

But while Popp, who was largely responsible for directing the victory, was signing autographs from his position on the stretcher, it was Joyce to whom visitors turned.

His baptism aside, Joyce's next assignment figures to be slightly more ominous as Tech goes to Tuscaloosa for an evening with Alabama.

"I just want to enjoy this one," he was saying of the win over Virginia, only Joyce's third appearance of the year in a varsity uniform.

"I watched some films of Alabama last Sunday and Monday."

What he saw, others viewed on television as Alabama remained unbeaten with a 42-21 win over Tennessee.

"It was the finest exhibition I've seen," confessed Alabama coach Bear Bryant. And there was indication that there is more where that came from.

So, into the breach goes Eddie Joyce, who very nearly wasn't a part of the squad, much less the varsity.

It was during summer practice that Joyce, after overcoming a bout with bruised ribs joined a fellow Roanoke recruit in a two man walkout from the Tech campus. But by the time Joyce reached home, he was on the telephone requesting to return to Blacksburg.

The first four weeks of the season he spent on the junior varsity team, calling signals of the weekly opposition against the Tech varsity.

Then came the call against Virginia and Joyce responded, hoping that "I wouldn't fumble or give it to them with it being that close."

"I felt like I had a load on my shoulders," he confided.

To be a part of Tech's first win, of course, was exhilarating for Joyce.

After watching six previous defeats, he noted "it hasn't been fun."

An emotion, no doubt to be pursued at Alabama.