Tech's Popp Out For Season, Joyce Is QB

BLACKSBURG (UP) — Virginia Tech Coach Charlie Coffey says he will start freshman Eddie Joyce at quarterback against Alabama this Saturday.

Coffey said Monday the quarterback Ricky Popp underwent knee surgery and will be out for the remainder of the season.

Popp was injured in the fourth quarter of the Virginia Tech-Virginia game last Saturday, Tech downed the Cavaliers 27-15 for its first win of the season and Joyce ran three yards for a touchdown.

Sophomore Greg Mullinax was elevated to the backup quarterback spot. Mullinax had served as messenger in the last three games, running in every play from Coffey and then leaving the field before the play began.

Coffey said freshman Mitchell Barnes of Southampton, Va., has been brought up from the junior varsity to act as messenger.

Joyce is a 6-4, 195-pound quarterback from Andrew Lewis High School in Salem, Va., where Joyce starred for three years. He was one of five quarterbacks signed by Tech this past recruiting year.

Joyce was fame for his tremendous passing abilities in high school and was named to several high school All-America teams.

It is rather interesting that Joyce, a freshman, will be starting against another school that was once trying to sign him—Alabama. Coach Bear Bryant would have liked to sign Joyce, but the Andrew Lewis star, who's father is the coach at AL, said that he wanted to go to a school that passed the ball a lot.

That obviously left Alabama out of the running. A Wishbone team doesn't pass that much.

Joyce signed with Tech because he thought he could possibly play varsity as a freshman, since last season's national passing leader Don Strock had graduated and the job was up for grabs.

Bruce Ariens has reportedly broken an arm and left the team. Popp's knee was injured on a late fourth quarter drive Saturday when he was hit by Virginia linebacker Dick Amrouse, who in his free-time eats glass. Joyce came in and directed the Gobblers to a touchdown, but not throwing a single pass in the drive. He ran the ball in himself, for the score.

Joyce has seen action in the past three games. He will surely be tested early against Alabama with their tremendous pass rush defense.