A Hokie's Last Hurrah: Time for Relief, Regrets

By Ray Filegar

Tuesday was a beautiful day, particularly in the mountains, and Bruce Lemmert took advantage.

"Pete Horoszko (Lemmert's roommate and teammate at Virginia Tech) and I went to this farm just outside of Blacksburg and did a little hunting this morning," related the Tech lineman later in the day. "It was really nice out there."

The duo's success — "We got a couple of rabbits," said Lemmert — was merely aplus for Lemmert who truly enjoys the outdoors. So much so that when the 6-3, 240-pound offensive tackle hangs up his cleats, he intends to pursue a career in forestry and wildlife.

And Bruce Lemmert, like the overwhelming majority of college seniors who have played football, is about to hang up his cleats.

"I'm kinda happy that it's over," said the Frostburg, Md., gridder, who will make his last appearance as a player Saturday afternoon when the Techmen meet VMI at Lane Stadium in Blacksburg. "When you think about it, though, you kinda have regrets. You know, the whole season and everything."

It has been something of a disaster, this football season at Virginia Tech. At the beginning, there were high hopes of a good season. If things went well, maybe even better than good. As the Gobblers' 2-8 record would indicate, things haven't gone as planned.

"We haven't done very well," acknowledged Lemmert. "But we could have been a real good team. There are lot of good athletes here."

"But we got some bad breaks in the first game and never jelled. And we still haven't."

Even last week, when Tech ripped winless Florida State, it was obvious the Gobblers didn't, as the saying goes, have it all together. If they had, the score would have been closer to 70-13 than 36-13.

In recent years, the meetings between Tech and VMI have almost always found the Gobblers favored. Heavily favored. And while that rating will go to Tech again this year in most quarters, it will be forecasted by a much smaller margin. The Keydets, also 2-8, would seem to have a decent shot at winning.

Lemmert certainly isn't overlooking them.

"When I was a freshman, it was 20-0 their favor at half, and we (freshmen) just barely beat them," remembered Lemmert. "That year, the varsity just squeezed past them (20-14), too."

Those memories (Lemmert saw little action as a soph, when Tech romped, 34-0, and the two teams did not meet last season) and the fact that its the last game of his career will no doubt weigh on Lemmert's mind this weekend. Moreover, there just haven't been enough wins this year to suit the big tackle.

"I guess the highlight of my football here was last year's homecoming," added Lemmert. "That was when we beat Oklahoma State. That was a big win for everybody."

"Any victory this year has been sweet, even if they weren't against the big teams."

"I'm glad this last one is VMI, a traditional rival. Not that the game could make up for the season or anything like that, but the tradition aspect should help everyone get up."

And after the last game, then what?

"Well, I'll probably come back for more schooling next fall. This summer, I hope to get a job in Colorado or Montana and see what it takes."

To work in the great outdoors, that is.

Looking back, and ignoring for a moment the present won-loss record, Lemmert admits to enjoying it all.

"Overall I had fun playing football here," he said. "With maybe one other exception..."

Asked what he would change about college football, Lemmert replied:

"I think I'd do away with spring ball," he said, with a hint of laughter. "Spring just doesn't seem like the time of the year to be playing football."

"I mean, you put on 20 pounds of equipment and start walking over to the practice field and there all those pretty girls, sunning themselves in bikinis."

"And you have to ask yourself, 'Am I crazy, or what?'"

That chorus of cheers you just heard came from umpteen-thousand other gridders who may or may not be interested in the great outdoors.