Disbelieving Coffey declares there'll be some changes

By BOB LIPPER

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BLACKSBURG—The question was out to Charlie Coffey innocently enough. In the wake of a 2-9 season and in response to a line of defense that permitted 476 yards total offense per outing, would there be any substantive changes defensively?

“There'll definitely be some changes made,” he said. These announcements will come about at the proper time.”

His audience perked up. What type of changes? he was asked. Personnel or philosophy?

Charlie Coffey allowed himself just the slightest hint of a smile. “I’m not,” he drawled, “talking about philosophy.”

And with that, Coffey, in his third—and most disappointing by far—season, admitted what has been rumored for weeks—that defensive coordinator George McKinney and perhaps the entire defensive staff (the others are Tommy Brasher, Monty Crook and Carl Ellis) will in all likelihood not be retained.

Thus did Coffey, said to be in no danger of losing his position this year, reveal the first steps he intends to take in an effort to restructure an overpublicized program seemingly gone wrong.

Good things had been expected of this Tech edition, but the record is the worst in 22 years and Coffey, calmly discussing the post mortems, said, “All of it is hard for me to believe or tolerate or what have you.”

“We faced a lot of problems along the line,” he added. “I hope I’m a better football coach because of them. I know I’m a better person.”

Those whose careers appear in doubt might debate that last point. And they are not without their backers. “I think they’re fine coaches,” said senior linebacker Dennis Dodson of the men he has toiled under.

But when asked why the defense proved so permissive this season, Dodson shook his head and said, “I don’t know what it was. I sure wish I did.”

Charlie Coffey, it seems, has similar thoughts. And, as an employer, one would guess he feels that the best defense is a good offense.