Charlie Coffey appears to have taken the first step on the road back to respectability for Virginia Tech football with the hiring of Bill Clay to head the defense. It’s a rehiring, since Clay spent one year on the Coffey staff as coach of linebackers.

The year was 1972, known at that time as “Explosion ’72,” a winning 6-4-1 season. The defense—especially linebackers—dug in and held against powerful teams such as Oklahoma State, SMU and Houston.

The decline of the defense in ’73, the year in which the fuse was lit only twice and there was no explosion, was underlined dramatically by what SMU and Houston (to name only two) did to it.

Clay is known to have rapport with the players, certainly needed before anything can be accomplished. If the defense, some of whom played very well under him before, can equal their earlier effort, there can’t be another Depression ’73.

The rehiring of Clay is actually the second stepping stone for what we hope will be Comeback ’74. The first was Coffey’s announcement that the majority of new recruits who will be signed will be defensive players. This action speaks louder than words and should be accentuated by Coffey’s first news release on signees, expected from his office soon, possibly this weekend.

A quick glance at Tech’s records through the years is enough to convince anyone that defense is a tradition among Gobbler football teams. We hope Clay can play a major part in restoring some of its former luster.

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