Tech Loses Coach Clay, Maybe Joyce

By BILL BRILL  
Times Sports Editor

Billy Clay, who just 22 days ago was announced as the new defensive coordinator on the troubled Virginia Tech staff, has now changed his mind and will remain on the football staff at South Carolina, The Roanoke Times learned Wednesday night.

The Times also learned that Eddie Joyce Jr., the passing wizard at Andrew Lewis High who was the heir apparent to the Tech quarterback job, has apparently left the Blacksburg school. Joyce reportedly plans to attend Tennessee.

Tech Coach Charlie Coffey confirmed Wednesday that Clay was going back to South Carolina, but would not comment on the Joyce situation.

"You'll have to ask Joyce," Coffey said. Joyce started the last three games of the year at quarterback for Tech in his freshman season.

Clay had been heralded as the man who would remake the Tech defense, which crumbled virtually every Saturday last fall as the Hokies suffered through a 2-9 season.

"It is true that he (Clay) is not coming to Tech," Coffey said. "It was more or less a preliminary thing so a definite decision had not been reached. We thought he would take the job."

However, on Dec. 11, Coffey said, "I hated to lose him last summer, but I'm even more happy to have him back. He's one of the most thorough coaches I've ever been around. The players admire and respect him."

The announcement of Clay's hiring was greeted with enthusiasm by the Tech players. At that time, Clay said, "I'm very happy to be returning to Virginia Tech. I've always felt that everything at Tech is conducive to producing a great football program. I don't feel the problems are so severe that they can't be solved by winning. I'd be a fool to come back if I didn't believe that."

By Wednesday, however, Clay had changed his tune. He called Coffey from his Columbia, S.C., home Tuesday night to inform the Tech coach of his decision.

"Of course South Carolina wanted him to stay," Coffey said. "They undoubtedly offered an increase (in salary). We talked at length about his decision."

The Times learned that Clay had received an excellent offer at Virginia Tech, reportedly with a salary of $22,250,000, exceptional for an assistant coach.

Contacted in Columbia, Clay said "no comment" on the situation. He said he would talk "off the record" on his status, apparently waiting for Coffey to make the official announcement.

South Carolina Coach and athletic director Paul Dietzel was in Norfolk Wednesday night on a recruiting mission, talking with Gamecock assistants and others about the possibility of vaccinating the Tech staff. He could not be reached for comment, but his wife said from Columbia that she understood Clay had rejoined the South Carolina staff.

Clay coached at Tech in 1972, when the Hokies were 6-4-1. That is the only winning season in the last five for the Hokies. He coached linebackers at Tech, the same position he held last year at South Carolina.

Clay is a graduate of Arkansas and was a member of the 1961 Cotton Bowl team. He was an assistant and then head coach at Granby High in Norfolk.

Clay was on the Virginia staff for three years. He was the freshman coach in 1969, varsity secondary coach in 1970 and defensive coordinator in 1971.

Now that Clay has decided to remain at South Carolina, Coffey must resume his search for a man to replace George McKinney, who resigned under fire after the '73 season. Two other openings on the Tech defense staff also have not been filled.

Clay recruited the Roanoke area for South Carolina last fall and has resumed that position, seeking to sign Andrew Lewis star Charlton Webb...