Gobblers Lose QB Joyce
And Defensive Aide Clay

By Bill Millsaps

For the second time in five months, Billy Clay has left the Virginia Tech football coaching staff to rejoin the South Carolina staff.

Tech coach Charlie Coffey said yesterday that Clay, hired Dec. 11 as Hokies' defensive coordinator, was going to remain at South Carolina. Clay was Tech's linebacker coach for the 1972 season and went to South Carolina in July of 1973.

IN ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT, Coffey also confirmed that quarterback Eddie Joyce, a freshman who started the last four games of the 1973 season, had left the team and withdrawn from school for what Coffey called "personal and academic reasons." The Tech coach refused to elaborate.

Coffey denied a published report that Joyce, one of the Hokies' most highly-publicized signees last year, was going to transfer to Tennessee.

It also was disclosed that linebacker Keith Shirley, brother of star Tech linebacker Tommy Shirley, would transfer to N. C. State. Keith Shirley signed with Tech last year but left the squad after the first week of pre-season workouts.

"I think we need a national letter-of-intent in hiring coaches," said Coffey of Clay's return to South Carolina. "I have never had anything like this happen to me before."

Coffey said that Clay had begun recruiting for Tech Dec. 11 and that he had drawn "a piece of a paycheck." The Hokies' coach said Clay went to Columbia, S. C., to visit his family over the holidays and was "apparently re-recruited" by Gamecocks' coach Paul Dietzel.

"I know Dietzel didn't want to lose Billy," added Coffey. "Billy called me on New Year's Eve to tell me he was staying at South Carolina. He came to Blacksburg and we had a talk.

"Billy is a real fine person, and he's very frustrated over the situation."

Coffey said he was "extremely shocked and dazed" by Clay's sudden decision, but that he planned no protest to Dietzel "because I only want people here with me at Tech who are totally dedicated to doing the job here."

—JOYCE'S DEPARTURE leaves the Hokies with four quarterbacks going into the 1974 season. Steve Mathieson, a 6-5 sophomore who broke his collarbone in his only game appearance of '73, is the probable No. 1 signal-caller. Ricky Popp, Mitchell Barnes and Greg Mullinax are the likely reserves.

With Clay and Joyce gone and with a disastrous 2-9 season behind him, Coffey described his job as "one adversity after another. I've aged 20 years since the first of September."