Tech Players Are Shocked

By DAN SMITH
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Virginia Tech's football players had begun drifting back onto campus Friday morning when they heard the news: Charlie Coffey was gone.

"I was shocked," said Roanoke junior linemen Tom Shirley. "He had said he was going to stay. I knew he had considered leaving, but after he said he would stay, I didn't think about it any more."

Coffey had coached Tech to 4-7, 6-4-1 and finally the disastrous 2-9 record of the 1973 season, which ultimately, along with several other considerations, led to his resignation tendered Friday to president T. Marshall Hahn.

In recent days, pressure had built on Coffey. At the end of the season, Coffey had fired his defensive staff. In the last week, Billy Clay, who had said he would stay over the defense, decided to stay at South Carolina and quarterback Eddie Joyce had left school.

"It had a snowballing effect," said Shirley. "This built up and the attitudes got worse and worse. But when it happened I was still shocked."

"I am not really disappointed in Coach Coffey. I have a lot of respect and admiration for him. It may be the best thing for him. I was dissatisfied with losing the number of games we lost last year, but I was not dissatisfied with the program. It is hard to say, but I don't know that anybody else could have done better than he did. I thought he was a good coach."

Junior defensive back David Halstead said, "We will have to wait and see what will happen. I am a little apprehensive about what a new coach will do. There is the possibility that he will want to concentrate on rebuilding the program with the younger players. It is something I will have to think about. I am still fuzzy about Coach Coffey quitting."

"I have mixed emotions about it. I have a lot of respect for Coach Coffey. I am sorry it happened."

Halstead said he did not know exactly why Coffey quit. "It was a lot of little things, nothing you can put your finger on. I was surprised he quit, I wasn't expecting it."

Shirley said the timing of Coffey's move caught him off guard. "I thought that if he was going to quit he would have done it weeks ago. The timing surprised me more than his actually quitting."

Neither Halstead nor Shirley could gauge the reaction from the remainder of the squad. "We haven't been together," said Shirley. "Most of the players are just getting back from vacation and they are rushing around trying to arrange schedules. I haven't talked to many of them."

I thought they (the players who told Halstead) were joking when they said he quit," said Halstead. "I don't think there is one general reaction you could pinpoint. It has been mixed."

Shirley hopes a new coach will be named soon. "The sooner we get a new coach, the better," he said, "for obvious reasons."

"I don't think it will make a great deal of difference who the coach is. A big reputation will not necessarily make him any better. It is more what the coach is than who he is."

Halstead said "We are going to have to prove ourselves to a new man and he will have to prove himself to us. I think a name coach would build confidence immediately."

Shirley said he felt the total effect would neither help nor hurt recruiting. "Some people who wanted to come here will not and some who did not want to come will reconsider. It won't help recruiting, but I don't think it will hurt all that much either."

Bu regardless of who the new coach is, Shirley said, "I don't expect any monumental difference. We were going to change anyway even if he stayed. Our defensive staff would have been different and that would almost certainly have changed the look of the defense."

But Shirley said, "We will have to wait and see what happens."