Says New Tech Head Coach

No Promises, Just Work

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Initial information about Alabama's Jimmy Sharpe accepting a five-year pact as Virginia Tech's head coach was featured on Tuesday's front page of the Times.)

By JERRY RATCLIFFE
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BLACKSBURG — Blond-haired, blue-eyed Jimmy Sharpe came in the dining area, sat down and apologized to about six newsmen for being late for lunch in the spacious Red Lion Inn.

"Coach Bryant just called," the personable 11-year Alabama assistant noted. "He (Bryant), told me that 'I guess you'll be wanting some of that money now.'" Sharpe said. But Sharpe had no need to ask the legendary Bear, who he played and coached under to clarify that. The Bear said again. "I guess you'll be wanting some of that money now." Sharpe, knowing that the Bear was about to pull a joke on him, replied: "What money?"

Sharpe told the few newsmen gathered that Bryant said, "some of that Birmingham money, you'll have to renegotiate some of those contracts for about 10 years and come down here each season and get some of that Birmingham gate." Everyone laughed, evenSharpe, who knew Bryant was just joking. What Bryant referred to was 70,000-seat Legion Field in Birmingham, where a team gets a good portion of the gate even for losing.

Sharpe said thanks, but no thanks, for the time being. Talking about such things as the Sugar Bowl, recruiting, the new World Football League and the like, Sharpe ordered only a glass of tea, to make sure eating wouldn't get in the way of him asking all the questions being directed at him.

Sharpe, a three-year starter under Bryant as a two-way guard, was co-captain of the 1962 team along with the Dallas Cowboys' Lee Roy Jordan. He came to Tech, highly recommended by Bear Bryant.

Sharpe, a Montgomery (Ala.) native had just signed a five-year pact earlier that morning before holding a news conference. At the news conference, the new Tech chief said he would work on defense first, then a kicking game, then install an offense that "won't get us beat.

A strong believer in the Wishbone, the new coach said that he would certainly consider that offense which he says puts back an element into a football team that is primarily a passing team, and that's "mental toughness." If not a Wishbone, he said, then certainly as offense built around the running game which will form this mental toughness.

He said that recruiting wise, Tech had a chance to salvage...more than salvage, some good players. He said later that he would contact everybody on Frank Moseley's list (Tech's athletic director), personally before today. "We won't sign anybody that can't help us as a freshman and play for us as a sophomore," Sharpe said, noting that the 30-scholarship limit almost forced coaches to do this in such situations.

Concerning assistant coaches, Sharpe said that he would have eight assistant coaches and three graduate assistants, all of whom will handle recruiting, but that the entire staff will work together.

He added that he had several assistants in mind from Alabama which he had worked with and from the Southeastern Conference. Asked whether he would retain any former Tech personnel (which were released of duties after Charlie Coffey resigned),Sharpe said he didn't know any of those men personally, and really couldn't say at this time. One that surely will not be retained is Dan Henning, Tech offensive coordinator who took his old job Tuesday, as offensive coordinator at Florida State.

Sharpe is a good man. He made no promises, just said that he and his staff would work. He's a hardened coach on the field and in practice. "He's a hard worker, and that's where it all starts. You don't outcoach anyone, you try to outwork them. Jimmy will work," said Bear Bryant.

Frankly, I don't think Tech could have hired a better man for the job, and he's got my support all the way. We wish him the best.