Three aides join Tech grid staff

New Virginia Tech football coach Jimmy Sharpe named two more assistants today, bringing his staff to three.

The newest Tech aides are Danny Ford, a former assistant at Alabama, and Perry Willis, from Livingston University.

Both Ford and Willis have a long Alabama background. They played for the Crimson Tide from 1967 through 1969 and participated on teams that went to the Cotton, Gator and Liberty bowls. Each also started as a graduate assistant at Alabama.

Willis, 26, who was a split end and defensive back, joined the Livingston staff in 1971 and worked with the offensive backs.

Ford, All-SEC offensive tackle his senior year (after two seasons at tight end), served as a grad assistant for two years before being elevated to the varsity staff in 1972.

Charley Pell, another veteran coach who got his start at Alabama, was named as Sharpe's first assistant yesterday. Pell was a teammate of Sharpe's at Alabama, but has been head coach at Jacksonville State the last five years.

"It was the toughest decision of my life," Pell said in changing jobs. "I had to choose between a secure job as coach and athletic director at Jacksonville and the challenge and uphill battle to establish Tech football."

Pell added that he is sold on Sharpe. "But," he continued, "I also had to be impressed with the situation and the offer at Virginia Tech. It's so ideal. It's going to be exciting."

Pell was an assistant at Kentucky for five years before assuming the head spot at Jacksonville in 1969.

After one rebuilding year, he led Jacksonville State to a 10-0 record in 1970 and a victory in the Orange Blossom Classic. His teams have led the Gulf State Conference in defense for three of the last four seasons.

Sharpe was obviously pleased at his first choices. He is expected to announce five more assistants by the weekend.

"We need to start with compatibility among our staff, and these three men definitely know how we plan to do things," he said.