Sharpe Finds Recruiting Difficult at Virginia Tech

BLACKSBURG—The projector whirled, spitting out hundreds of feet of film. The images on the screen mean nothing, unless you know what you are looking for.

There is an offensive tackle, No. 74, outfitted in black. The runningback, who somebody said couldn’t stand being like him, has been the four-liner in the 100 yard dash. In his best time he was riding in the back of a truck.

Jimmy Sharpe, three weeks the Virginia Tech head football coach, squints his eyes. He’s seen enough. I mean, this isn’t like watching Raquel Welch peeling off her bathing suit. The film of football players on film is probably not Jimmy Sharpe’s favorite parttime. But when you are a year behind in recruiting, when you have 30 scholarships open and only 12 signees, you look at a lot of film, you try to find some football players, Best Ones Gone

Therein lies a problem, because most of the best ones are gone. Some, like Newport News’ Larry Bethes, are in a holding pattern, hovering over places like Notre Dame and Nebraska, but they won’t be holding for long.

“I think Bethes will sign in the next three or four days,” Sharpe says. “I think we have a chance.”

Sharpe says he is in the middle of a critical recruiting week. “We should sign some players this week,” he says. “We have several visiting us this weekend.”

Sharpe’s approach to recruiting appears to differ from his predecessor, Charlie Coffey. Coffey decided the 30 rule, the rule which limits schools from signing more than 30 football players in one year. Maybe Sharpe has resigned himself to the fact that he has to live with it, but he doesn’t knock it, at least not publicly.

In fact, it is highly possible Jimmy Sharpe will not sign the (30) quota. “If we can’t find but 10 football players, then we’ll only sign 38,” he says. “We’re close on several players. We’re beginning to show a little production.”

Behind From Start

Of course, Sharpe and his staff were behind, way behind, from day one. In many cases, it will be impossible to make up that lost time. In others, Sharpe will make the sale.

“We go into a home and the kid says, ‘Coach, I appreciate you coming by, but you’re late’, but how can we be late because we haven’t been here but a few days.”

The time-consuming thing, Sharpe says, is watching films. He feels strongly about compiling a list of where the good athletes are and who is qualified academically.

He spent a tremendous amount of time doing those things,” Sharpe says. “We’ve got a pretty good list now. We’ve got coaches in Pennsylvania and New Jersey recruiting now. We believe we have some success.”

For Sharpe to have a good recruiting year, he’ll have to find some of the so-called “sleepers” who are not highly recruited. Looking for “sleepers” is like playing Russian roulette. You can get shot with a lot of them.

“There are always some who you can find in a state, and I think the track meet or a basketball tournament who are tremendous athletes, but haven’t gotten the ink in football,” Sharpe says. “We’re going to have to find some of them.

“Sure, I’d like to have all ability, but I’ve never seen a great team yet that had all ability. We’re going to have to go to war with some of those kids who have more desire than ability.”