Wave Star Leonard Walker To Play At Virginia Tech

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"The best way to build a winning football program is to get yourself a few good ball players," Petersburg football coach Norm Jenkins declared.

And, evidently, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, more commonly known in these parts as Virginia Tech, has taken Jenkins' commentary totally to heart.

In a quiet and unassuming manner by Jenkins' home territory yesterday afternoon, the Hokies signed Crimson Wave star Leonard Walker to a full grant-in-aid.

Walker has been acknowledged one of the top high school linemen in the Central Region for the past three years, both offensively and defensively. He was one of the more highly sought football prospects in the state before signing with Virginia Tech.

He will enroll this fall, seeking a major in either physical or distributive education while playing football.

Present at the contract signing, which took place in the Walkers' residence on Court Street, were Jenkins, Virginia Tech scout Perry Willis and the star's parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Walker.

Jenkins was unimpressed by the praises of the 6-foot-4, 245-pound offensive and defensive tackle, who has been under consideration as a college prospect for both units.

The Hokies, who express the intention of converting to the Wishbone-T offense this season, have indicated that they plan to use Walker on the defensive unit, although they may decide to take advantage of his blocking ability instead.

"He's been a fine player for us, for three years now. I sure hate to lose him," Jenkins remarked to Willis. "But I know you're getting yourself a real good prospect. I don't think you're going to be disappointed in him at all."

Walker is one of several promising high school graduates from the state Virginia Tech anticipates signing this year to bolster a program that has hit the skids in the past five seasons.

The school has once entertained visions of building a national power and had come close on a few occasions, particularly under the coaching of Jerry Claiborne during the late 1960s.

Claiborne later went to the University of Maryland, where this year he led the Terps to their first winning season in almost a decade and a Gator Bowl bid.

Tech, meanwhile, went down under former Arkansas defensive coordinator Charley Coffey, this past year finishing 2-9 and capping the miserable season with a loss to lowly VMI.

Walker confessed to being impressed with the facilities at Virginia Tech, and he said the attitude of the coaching staff in Blacksburg did much to influence his final decision.

He had particular praise for new VPI coach Sharpe former offensive coordinator at the University of Alabama under coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and the man largely responsible for installing the Wishbone there.

"He sounded like a pretty fall sort of man," Walker remarked. "All the coaches there seemed pretty nice. I think I'll like it there."

If Sharpe is successful with the offense at Tech, this will be the third major alteration the school's football image has undergone in the past decade.

Under Claiborne, defense was the keynote; under Coffey, the passing of Don Strock and the wide-open, high-scoring style dominated; and, under Sharpe, the image promises to be more the quick-striking running attack that made powerhouse of Alabama, Oklahoma and Texas.