By DENNIS LATTAN
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BLACKSBURG — When the Virginia Tech football team put its pads on for spring practice in two weeks, there
will be about 15 uniforms left on.
Because of academic and other problems, about 15 players have quit. Ricky Popp, the starting quarter-
back at the beginning of last year, Steve Matheson, who
was quarterback after Popp was injured, and4 other
brothers, Jim and Paul, were the best of the 15 players who
could not be released out the spring or next fall.

Popp still wears a brace on his leg from an injury he re-
ceived during last year. He has hung up his helmet for
medical reasons. Matheson has dropped out of school
completely. He, according to one observer, plans to attend
a junior college in Florida and then go to Florida State
where former Tech offensive coordinator Dan Henning is
coaching.
The Heiners both ran into academic problems.
Some said they were not good star with Cave Spring.
But Gobler Coach Jimmy Harp just isn’t alarmed by the
loss. He is confident that it won’t hurt his program and
that the worst is over.
"Academics were a real problem, when we started this year," Sharpe explained. "Most of the players have not been applying themselves.

Exams came up about a week or two weeks ago, ending the quarter and that’s when the players made their decisions. I had told the players that we were stressing acade-
ic, I’m a believer that a good program on the field should carry over into the classroom.

"We’ve been trying to im-
press the players that aca-
demics and athletics go hand
in hand. They must have self-
pride in all aspects of life, on
the field and off.

"If we were working, I could understand it better," Sharpe said about the resigna-
tions. "But we haven’t done anything yet. We’re going to put the pads on and get into it in about two weeks.

When Sharpe arrived at Tech, he let it be known that he was a hard worker and he was going to make his team to work hard. He believes in hard football.

With that in mind, some people thought that the Gob-
blers would be losing players when the actual practicing started, but that practice hasn’t started.

So phase one of Sharpe’s re-
building program should be
complete. The players who
did not think they were up to
date academically have re-
signed.

Now his program gets down to phase two — the athletics instead of selling the working pro-
gram, he’s trying to build it.

"We’ve got to win or lose with what’s here now. There’s no lip service coming, from this team. We’ll rely on plain fact. We’ll have to prove our
worth in Little Stadium and that’s not going to be easy. Sharpe exp-
plained. "That attitude to carry over into everything."