Tech works for quickness

"Quickness," says new Virginia Tech football coach Jack Sharp, "is a state of mind. It's a result of mental concentration. It's being able to move in a short distance in the quickened amount of time. It's as easy to repeat at maximum speed to a sound or sight."

There are many who think quickness is simply a natural trait that can be developed only to a limited scale. But Jack Sharp disagrees.

"An athlete can do a lot to improve his quickness just like he can his strength and speed," Sharpe said. "Quickness is just as important in athletics. There are all types of physical and mental drills that can be used to improve quickness.

Quickness is just one of the things Sharp and his staff are looking at as they start the winter workouts at Tech. And Sharp has been impressed with what he has observed.

"They're slimier," he said. "We have many younger men who were timed in the 40 in 4.8 and 4.9 when we first started practice in January. Now they are doing 4.6 and 4.7 consistently."

"And we have some who could bench press only 225, they are up to 280 and 300. That makes a big difference," he added.

But Sharp is a realist.

"We have looked pretty darn good in shorts," he said. "But football isn't played in shorts.

Arians gets new life

Bruce Arians is one Gobbler who must think he's getting a new lease on his football life. It was this past spring when Arians was regarded as the No. 1 quarterback by former head Coach Charlie Coffey.

He was an excited young man. He had never really had that chance to prove himself. He was even red-shirted his sophomore year. He sat on the bench for two years while Don Strick led the nation in passing and total offense.

But last spring, things were different. Strick had completed his eligibility and was ready for his shot at professional football with the world champion Miami Dolphins. Arians was the No. 1 prospect as a replacement.

Bruce had a good spring game and was the starter last fall in the opener against William and Mary. But it was a loss for Tech and Arians lost his job. Things got bad for the tough young man from York, Pa., that he didn't even treat for some of the home games.

First, Rich Popp was the quarterback. An injury sidelined him for the season and freshmen Eddie Joyce, Jr. of Salem took over the reins.

Now, Arians is back as the No. 1 prospect since he decided to play his senior year rather than push for his graduation and a job either in pro ball or in the business world.

Joyce dropped out of school with academic trouble last year and Popp decided to give up the seat, so it looks like Arians might well get new life as the Tech signal caller.

He is the only one of the four candidates with varsity experience. The other three are Mitch Barnum, who handled the fullback chores for the Scorps last fall; Danny Bailey, a seldom-used reserve; and Greg Mollinax, who gained speed, rushing time as the varsity messenger last fall.

They're raring to go

Sharpe has gone to great lengths to plan what he hopes will be a productive spring practice. Sharpe has tried to put the pads on and get started Monday as we coaches are to see what the players can do.

The spring squad will number about 150 including some walk-ons. Sharpe plans to practice five days the first week, have the next two days off, and alternate the next two weeks to prepare for the spring game May 18. He hopes to have an early day or so to work out before the spring game.

"Our big objective," said Sharpe, "is to develop leaders and abilities. We spend as much as possible in the first five days completely on individual work. We will use the next two weeks to bring in a little line on each younger.

"We want to place each player in the position he can prove most helpful to the entire squad. We will work first on defense and the result of our individual efforts might find some younger players at positions different from where they were last fall.

They should prove interesting this spring at Tech.

"That's a great understanding," replied Sharpe.