By DENNIS LATTA
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BLACKSBURG — To keep up with Buddy Bennett, you need a road atlas without maps.
He lived in Georgia before going to the University of South Carolina where he played football. After that he coached at East Tennessee State. The teams in Arkansas and Georgia Tech.

Now Bennett is coaching at Virginia Tech. His family hasn’t moved up from Atlanta yet, so Bennett is living with the football players in the dormitory.

"When I was coaching defensive backs at Tennessee, Coach (Jim) Sharpe was coaching the offense at Alabama. We intercepted him nine times in that game. I think that helped me get the job," Bennett said.

Sharpe took over the football program in December. He hired a whole new staff. Bennett was one of his first choices for the staff and Bennett didn’t take much time accepting the offer.

"I had three offers at the same time, but I like this one over the others," Bennett explained. "I chose here because people from Alabama think like I do.

I think that Virginia Tech is a sleeping giant. There’s a chance for something big here and I thought a man like Coach Sharpe could do it.

"I had met Jim before coming here, but I didn’t really know him. I had heard of him and I knew enough about him to know that he’d let me coach the way I wanted to," said Bennett.

"When I came up here, I was impressed with the campus and facilities. I decided on my one visit here that I wanted the job."

Sharpe will not name a defensive coordinator for the team, but if he did it would probably be Bennett. Bennett was at the top of his list.

According to Bennett, "Coach Sharpe and I have the same ideas of what it takes to win. Our ideas of a winner go hand-in-hand. We know that we’re starting on the bottom this year, but we’re not planning on staying there.

"To me, the returnees from last year’s team are all alike. I’m not interested in what they did last year or where they played. We’re just looking for the best football players at their best positions. We’ll have the best players on the field in the fall."

Defense was Tech’s soft spot last season. The opposition could run, throw and even walk down field almost at will.

"We’re young. Now, we’re just working on basics. Every day in spring practice we’re spending over an hour on the fundamentals and just 30 minutes on coverage.

"The most important thing to us right now is execution," continued Bennett. "It’s not a matter of X’s and O’s on a blackboard but how well you execute. We will work on just one coverage this spring. We’ll add a few more in the fall, but we’ll use one coverage 90 percent of the time. That’s all you need if you do it well.

And Bennett will be trying to do it well with the type of team he’s not used to. It will be slower than he likes and he would rest easier if it was more experienced.

"We could do with less speed at certain positions than others because we’ll be facing the veer so much this year. We won’t be blessed with a lot of speed. That’s a major factor of concern.

"But what we’re working for is a little football sense and... knowledge of the game. We want players who know how to play well.

"I think that the first five teams we play use the veer. That means that we’ve got to concentrate more on the run. There used to be more passing for the defensive secondary to worry about. But the run has to be the problem with the veer."