Shirley Quits Tech

By DENNIS LATTA
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Roanoke's Tom Shirley, a highly touted linebacker at Virginia Tech the last two years, has quit the football team.

Shirley, 6-2, 233, resigned saying, "I'm just tired of playing football. Right now, I have no interest in playing at all."

The Patrick Henry graduate is on academically sound ground at Tech with over a 2.0 average and he was being counting on heavily by the new Tech staff in spring practice.

"Quite frankly, it came as a complete shock to me," said Coach Jim Sharpe. "He gave absolutely no indication before he came to tell me that he had decided to quit.

"I think he is an outstanding young man. He's been a real jewel to us. He's been a tremendous help in the transition here and we in no way consider him a quitter," Sharpe explained. "Football isn't for everybody."

Shirley was quick to point out that the coaching changes at Tech had nothing to do with his decision.

"That had nothing to do with it," he said. "I had been thinking about it for a good little while. Football is too hard a game to pay if you don't enjoy it and I wasn't enjoying it."

Shirley had come close to quitting before but had never actually done so. "I've never gone this far. My chances of changing my mind are slim to none.

"I've dropped out of school this quarter, but I plan to be back at Tech as a student after this quarter. I've never considered going to any another school, I like Tech, I'm just tired of football.

Sharpe met with Shirley for a lengthy talk and the new Gobbler coach is convinced that the Roanoker is following his conscience.

"If a young man is honest with himself, that's all you can ask for and I believe Tommy is being honest," Sharpe explained. "We talked at length and at the time he was very shook. It was a big decision for him.

"If for some reason, Tommy should change his mind, we'd be glad to have him back on our team. He's demonstrated a lot of leadership, especially with the younger players. He's well respected by everyone."

Tommy's brother Keith signed a grant with Tech last year but decided to not play football once he got there. He plans to attend North Carolina State this fall where he will be eligible this year.

Tommy, an upcoming senior, was a defensive leader for the Gobblers in 1972 until he suffered a knee injury in the sixth game. Last year he was one of the few bright spots in a Tech defense that was anything but outstanding.