JIMMY SHARPE will unveil Virginia Tech’s spring game in Lane Stadium come Saturday, and Gobbler fans are likely to get a look at a bit of “Bear Country” football right in the heart of Tech Territory. Sharpe, a class player and a long-tune assistant under Paul (Bear) Bryant of Alabama, assembled a young, ambitious staff and has set about the task of rebuilding Tech football fortunes.

“We’re spending a lot of time on basic fundamentals,” said Sharpe. “Our No. 1 priority is to establish a hard-nosed, tough defense. Our aim is to get 11 players moving as a unit on every play — both offense and defense. And if we can get people to hit ‘to win’ on every play we can get the job done.”

Sharpe has installed Alabama’s triple-option wishbone on attack, and has gone to an odd-man front and a four-spoke secondary on defense. Three quarterbacks have departed Tech since last season, and on the job is Bruce Arians, a 6-4, 201-pound senior, who was redshirted one season. He’s from York in Pennsylvania football territory.

“ARIANS HAS BEEN to war before,” said Sharpe. “But we’re going to have to find a backup man. Our offensive linemen are sophomore and freshmen without a lick of experience.”

The running corps will be well manned by three sturdy athletes from the Bristol area, and Sharpe has moved to add breakaway speed with the shift of two sprinters to offense.

Melvin Blueford, a 9.7 track star from Newport News, has been shifted from defense to offense, and Steve Galloway, a flanker with 9.8 swiftness, has joined the runners.

“Phantom Phil” Rogers from Gate City, Paul Adams of Castlewood, and George Heath from Tennessee High of Bristol are enjoying good spring.

“ROGERS HAS RUN the ball well, but he needs to block on the corners better,” said Sharpe. “Heath is running at the other halfback slot. He is the strongest blocker in the backfield.”

Cocoricchi is Sharpe’s “up man” at fullback in the wishbone. Castlewood’s “Black Ghost” took some time out to play baseball — giving senior Greg Tolto, 5-11, 210, a chance to post a challenge for fullback.

“Greg has been one of our most consistent backs,” said Sharpe.

RICKY SCALES is one of the nation’s fastest wide receivers, covering the 100 in 9.6. He has a basic ability to catch the ball, and it’s mighty hard to stay with him on one-on-one coverage,” Sharpe said. “But he needs to get tougher on his blocking. He hasn’t had to block before, but he will under our system.

“Our offensive line is as green as gourds,” Sharpe added. “It will be a question of finding who can get the job done.”

What about the defense, which had a tough year in 1973?

“The defense is getting better, but we still have a long way to go in consistency,” said Tech’s new bossman.

SHARPE SINGLED OUT Tommy Shirley, 6-3, 215-pound linebacker, as a defensive standout.

“We’ve moved Billy Hardee from a flanker to cornerback,” Sharpe said. “He has made the adjustment real well. Hardee is an athlete.”

“Just say we’ve got a lot of people scrapping for jobs, most of them youngsters,” h. said. “It’s not going to ‘be easy. There’s a lot of work to do — the kind that pays off when the going is tough. We want a winning attitude all the way.”

WHAT ABOUT the schedule?

“We play our breather in our spring game,” said Sharpe with a smile. “After that we go to war.”

Sharpe will play with Kentucky, and plays SMU and Houston the next two outings. Then comes VMI, South Carolina, Virginia, Richmond, Miami, William & Mary, Florida State and West Virginia.

That’s a rugged schedule for a young coach with a young team that has only eight seniors. It won’t be easy. But Jimmy Sharpe has never played easy football. All he knows is how to play to win.