All Work, No Play

Busy Summer Ahead for Tech Coaches

By DENNIS LATTA
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It's going to be a long, hot summer for the Virginia Tech football coaches this year. They'll be getting no vacations and no time off. There's too much work to be done.

"We're doing right now what we would have normally done a month ago," said Tech's Charlie Pell, the defensive line coach. "Our biggest time lag is in visiting schools. We're each assigned to areas of the state and just now we're getting out to the schools in those areas."

Pell is responsible for an area from Covington to Danville. He has been to every high school in the Roanoke area. As a matter of fact, there are 47 schools in his area and he's been to 41 of them. The other six are scheduled.

"Every year we'll get to every high school," Pell explained. "This year is the toughest because we've never met the people before. We just have to go in and introduce ourselves.

"If we're fortunate, we're able to talk to the head coach. Because school is out, we can't do that all the time. We have to have a rapport with the coaches and the principals of the schools."

Pell is a down-home boy who talks with a drawl. He is from Alabama and spent his life in the South. He easily gets along with people.

"People have been great," Pell pointed out. "They've made all of us feel welcome wherever we go. We haven't met any who haven't been cooperative."

During their tours around the state, the coaches have gotten up a long list of players to keep their eye on when the high school season opens this year. Because they were late starting, they've had to take the word of others on who might be a good prospect.

"The list is long. All the high school coaches tell us about any young people they feel we should look at. We'll be out every Friday during the fall. The entire staff will be out as much as possible because we've never seen any of these players before. We'll be going to scrimmages or anywhere we can see them play. We're going to be doing some traveling.

"We do have films of some of the players from last year. We've been able to go through the films that the high schools shot and from that we can tell who the prospects are," Pell said.

"But we haven't had nearly as much contact with the players as we'd like too. Coach (Jim) Sharpe (head coach) wants us to go into the homes and meet the boys and their family. We would do that this summer, but we won't have the time.

"We've got to gain the respect of the coaches. That is vital. We don't talk to anyone without permission. If the coach is against you, it is almost like suicide in recruiting. Most players get advice from his high school coach."

Pell will probably lead the pack in making friends for Tech. He hasn't had any trouble recruiting in the past. Pell came to Tech from Jacksonville State (Ala.) where he was head coach. Before that he coached at Kentucky. He started his career at Alabama.

"Coach Sharpe and I played football together for four years at Alabama. Then we started coaching there as graduate assistants at the same time."

"We might have had a little tough here at Tech until we get settled," Pell said. "But all of us have been in tight places before. We've all been knocked down before and we've managed to get back up. We'll do that here too."