Hokies Cheer Sharpe Talk

By BILL BRILL
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Mac McEver, who heads up Virginia Tech's Student Aid, told a large gathering of Hokies Monday night at Hotel Roanoke that "Coach Jimmy Sharpe will tell you a lot of things you want to hear."

McEver wasn't kidding.

Sharpe, Tech's personable young football coach, made another stop in a three week speed tour of the state, and once again he dominated the crowd.

"That's the way it has been every place," said Tech official John Moody. "The people have been very receptive to Jimmy."

The Sharpe message came across loud and clear.

"Involvement is the key word for us," he said. "We want everybody involved. . . . the coaches, the players, the alumni."

As he has said ever since taking over at Tech in late January, Sharpe stressed the mental aspect. "You start with the people that are there," he said. "You start with attitude. We have to develop a winning attitude. We think we've made a lot of strides in that direction."

Sharpe emphasized that a winning attitude was not just demonstrated on the field on Saturday, or the practice field during the week.

"At most that's four hours a day," he said. "We're talking about what the player does the other 20 hours a day."

Noting that when he and assistant Coach Charlie Pell, who also attended, were freshmen at Alabama in 1958, "They had won just one game in three years. Four years later we won the national championship."

"I'm not promising a national championship, but I am saying that we've been on the bottom and we've been on the top. We know the difference."

Sharpe's loudest applause came when he mentioned academics. "The academics for this spring quarter for the football team are the highest they have been in five years." With all of the problems that Tech has had recently with academic casualties, that was some positive good news for the old grads, who received it enthusiastically.

As far as his first Tech team was concerned, Sharpe steered away from promises, something that has been his way right along.

"We have a very young team," he said. "Most of them are children, but they are hungry, eager children."

"Our biggest problem is time. We need more time to get ready. They (players) may lose some this year, but they won't get beat."

The alumni liked that, too. When Sharpe finished, he received a standing ovation.

The supporters were happy, eager to please. Jimmy Sharpe just smiled. He feels the same way.