Development Of Younger Players
Gladdens VPI Grid Coach Coffey

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Virginia Tech Football Coach Charlie Coffey has a neat way of compressing time. "Just think, when we play our Spring Game Saturday, we'll have only 17 weeks before we meet William & Mary in our season opener."

Coffey is concluding his third set of Spring drills with the Gobblers. He says his present squad has more ability than either of his previous teams, but, "we're short on experience.

"I'm very pleased with the development of some of our younger players. Both quarterbacks, Bruce, Ariens and Rick Popp, show improvement. Phil Rogers, who will be a sophomore in the Fall, had looked good at running back. "We've had to rebuild our receiving corps and Billy Hardee and Jerry Inge have shown enough development to become important in our plans.

Skip Creasy, another of our rising sophomores, is doing well at tight end."

Development of receivers is very important to Gobbler football fortunes, because Coffey believes in building his offense around the passing game. In his first two years with the Gobblers, Coffey had the strong right arm of Don Strock to conduct his passing game. Strock is gone but Coffey feels his replacement, either Ariens, Popp or Eddie Joyce, who enters school in the Fall, will be able to do the necessary passing. His offensive star this year will be receiver Ricky Scales. "Scales is a definite All-American prospect. Right now, he has as much skill at his position as Strock did at his at the same point in his career. He has all the equipment to be one of the best pass catchers in the country. And he's had a terrific Spring."

Of his defensive players, Coffey has the same attitude about linebacker Tom Shirley as he has about Scales. He rates Shirley a potential superstar. Coffey adds that Shirley's talents can be overlooked because, as he asks, "How can you measure the effectiveness of a linebacker?"

Another coming stalwart on his defense unit is Morris Blueford. A Hamptonian who graduated from Bethel High School, Blueford was injured last season with the junior varsity squad. The head coach had high praise for his development. "Blueford, along with another rising sophomore, Doug Thacker, should make our starting defensive backfield. They'll be a great complement to Jerry Scharnus and the other returning defense backs."

In summing up his squad's situation, Coffey says the team is stronger and quicker than his previous clubs. "Also, we've been together now for three years, so the players are aware of my idiosyncrasies. They know how to adjust when we prod them to do better. We've been very compatible this Spring."

Coffey notes that injuries have hindered the team's development. "We've had 16 players out at some time during the drills. Of course, James Barber, our top returning running back, missed the entire Spring, but we know what we can do."

The coach has an unusual plan for the Spring game which winds up the drills. "Ariens will run the first unit and Popp, the second. At the end of the first half, we'll switch. I believe one team will be ahead and the quarterback who worked so hard to get out in front will have to work even harder to get the lead back.

"This should allow us to get a good look at our quarterbacks and that's one of the big things we want to do."