Balance Is Tech Coach's Goal

Balance—especially on offense—is one of the big aims this spring for Charlie Coffey and his Virginia Tech football team.

There was little doubt that the offense could move last year with All-American Don Strock doing the throwing. But the running game was almost nil and the defense was inexperienced and, as a result, had a record that wasn't impressive.

"We either threw three down and pumped," said Coffey, "or played very different. Either way, the defense was right back out there."

Coffey is hoping this doesn't happen again. He's not that he plans to give up the running game now that Strock has departed to try his luck in the pro ranks. But he does want the team to be hard to develop an offensive line and some running backs who will be as effective as either one or two. He feels they can get more offense more balanced and productive, it will help all around. It will keep the defense from stacking up on us and allow us to run our own defense to have more rest and to be better prepared to play.

Jim Belser

Local Players Impressive

Defense also has had its share of the work. Linebacker Tom Shirley from Patrick Henry promises to be another of the nation's best and already has had Tech people hailing him as a prime All-America contender.

Two former Cape Vine stars are impressive at defensive ends. Jim Bellar, who will be a junior, started every game last season and is looking tied at several backfield spots and at tackle.

Shirley is exceptionally impressive, said Coffey. "He should be a good one."

Dave Thacker, who won last limited action last season as a freshman on the varsity, has been playing linebacks—at a spot at which he gained all star honors in high school and at Staunton Military Academy."

"But we plan on trying him at end," Coffey said. Although Thacker is relatively small in size for a defensive end (6'3, 190), Coffey feels he is "plenty enough to play the position."

Coffey hasn't been taking it easy on his Gobblers. He's put a special emphasis on improving his offense against his best defense and so on down the drill.

"This is helping us," he explained, "but it also is getting more people hurt. But you can't help but. We are trying to get as many people experienced as we can. We have to develop depth and be sure we are getting the right people in the right positions. We won't have time to do that in the fall."