Coffey Believes
In Spring Drills

By BILL CATE
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BLACKSBURG—There is a move underway among some college football coaches to eliminate spring practice. A few would like to forget it completely. Others would like to see spring drills become just that—drills.

Mention that possibility to Virginia Tech Coach Charlie Coffey and get ready to fight. Coffey, who will coach his third spring game at Tech Saturday, is an adamant believer in spring practice. He says those coaches who aren't are lazy.

"What do they want to do?" Coffey asks. "Fish all spring? Heck, if we weren't having spring practice I'd be fishing on the James River right now."

Coffey says spring practice is a vital part of college football. He says without spring drills that the ability of his team (and anybody else's) would decrease drastically.

"What I would like to do," he says, "is play another team in the spring. Now all people want to talk about is money. What do you think would happen if we were playing the University of North Carolina Saturday? We'd have 40,000 for the game instead of 10,000."

Coffey simply doesn't believe you can accomplish much on the college level without spring practice.

"Spring is a time to experiment with players," Coffey says. "In the fall I can't look at this guy at defensive tackle and somebody else at offensive guard. I've got to take my players and teach them the plays, the assignments. I've got to get them ready to play. I can't be worried about

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Offensively, the orange team will have Scales and Steve Galloway at wide receivers, Phil Rogers, the freshman who is supposed to be phenomenal, and Greg Toal at runningbacks. Arians will quarterback this unit for a half, then swap teams with Ricky Popp for the second half.

The white team defensive secondary, which Coffey says is vastly improved, will have freshman Morris Blueford, John Bell, Jerry Scharnus and Howard Keyes. Ironically, all of Tech's defensive secondary starters are from the Tidewater area.

Other players to watch are, of course, Tom Shirley, a line

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somebody being in the right position."

"We teach the fundamentals in the spring. I've got to teach them how to block and tackle. If I can't do that in the spring I'm in trouble.

"The fall is for rehearsing and getting ready to play. In the spring you can scrimmage every day. If you get somebody hurt, then what? He'll miss a day or two days or maybe the entire spring but you won't lose a football game because he's out. They are usually ready to play in the fall."

"I also get those kids who haven't played a down some experience in the toughest situation I can find."

Coffey is concerned about the direction he thinks college football is heading.

"They've drastically reduced the scholarship limit," he says. "College football on television dropped in ratings last year for the first time in many years. These things have a way of snowballing. If you want to see the game lose a lot of excitement, just eliminate spring football. Kids who are aggressive and who are fundamentally sound are the ones who cause excitement."

"You can take a great speed merchant and he isn't worth a damn unless he can run his pass routes and catch the football. He's useless. He can run up and down the field but he can't get open and he can't catch the football."

"Take our Ricky Scales for example. He has great speed. He can beat anybody. But without spring practice, he wouldn't be able to run his routes or catch the football."

"In the spring is when Scales has become a great football player. We started with him last spring. He was a baby then. He was concerned about his personal safety. But watch him now. He's a great one."

For the spring game Saturday, Coffey has his first-unit skilled people—receivers, runningbacks and quarterback Bruce Arians — starting against the first-unit defensive secondary.