Who Won Football Recruiting War?

In the late spring days, when college football recruiters finally turn to the golf courses, tennis courts and next year's prospects, the big question is usually answered this way:

“We think we had a good recruiting year...but we won't know until we see these boys in action.”

Unlike basketball, where it is relatively easy to predict tomorrow's superstars, football recruiting is full of hazards.

Some prospects simply can't play. Others find out they don't want to play. Still others succumb to the battle of the books, and others will be injured.

Even in a survey of 12 major colleges—the state Big Five schools, the non-members of the Atlantic Coast Conference and independent West Virginia—it is impossible to say precisely which school had the best recruiting year.

It is, however, possible to draw some accurate conclusions.

West Virginia and Clemson did not recruit a Virginia player, but the other 10 schools surveyed signed no less than 114. Since all of the good prospects did not go exclusively to these schools, it is a certainty that some, perhaps many, of the state signees will not turn into players.

Few states have 114 major college prospects, and Virginia is not one of them, although most area coaches believe the Old Dominion is fertile recruiting land.

Within Virginia, the picture changed dramatically in a year. In 1972, Virginia Tech blitzed the state. The Hokies signed virtually every good prospect, and in the process blanked North Carolina, which had feasted on Virginia talent ever since Bill Dooley arrived on the Chapel Hill scene.

But that changed this year. Tech signed 30 in-state players, but lost almost all of the top choices except quarterback Eddie Joyce of Andrew Lewis and Gate City's Bill Housewright. The fence that Tech Coach Charlie Coffey wanted to build around Virginia prospects sprung a big leak.

North Carolina signed a dozen Virginia boys, getting virtually all of the top players in Tidewater including spectacular running back Mike Voight.

Virginia, which had an unexpectedly good signing year in spite of the delicate status of Coach Don Lawrence's future, led the way in signing members of The Roanoke Times' top 25 list. The Cavs got six players off that honor group.

Duke, which signed only five Virginians, tabbed four players off the Top 25 plus a kicker. North Carolina matched Tech's three Top 25 choices while Maryland and Richmond got two apiece.

Thus the top players in the state, as in most past years except '72, chose widespread paths to the colleges of their choice.

But, the question always is, who had the best recruiting year?

By
Bill Brill
Times Sports Editor

How do you tell when Virginia Tech recruits 59 players and Duke, which appeared to have a banner year with blue chippers, signs only 30?

What can you say when Wake Forest recruits as many players from Philadelphia as it does from its home state of North Carolina?

Here are thumbnail sketches on the recruiting years of each school:

Virginia Tech—The Hokies were third in the nation in total freshmen signings. Half of their players came from Virginia, and some of them surely will be good. Joyce, of course, is a proven product and could have a shot at being the varsity quarterback.

Housewright made Parade Magazine's All-American team, and Robert Blue of Faquier was the heavyweight wrestling champ. But Tech balanced off a less successful in-state year with great success in East Tennessee, where it landed, among others, Bristol fullback George Heath, a 200-pounder who was Tennessee's player of the year.