Virginia Tech Football

Area Grid Players Battling For Berths

BY DAVE SPARKS
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BLACKSBURG, Va. — More than a dozen Mountain Empire products are battling for starting positions as the Virginia Tech Gobblers open practice this week in preparation for the September 14 opener against Kentucky.

New head coach Jimmy Sharpe and his staff pared 140 varsity candidates into 60. Stadium here Saturday for Press Day and the squad gets down to serious business with two a-day drills on Monday.

"Most of the squad came back in good condition," said Sharpe. "A few are a little overweight, but some had slimmed down real good and we're pleased with the overall condition of the squad prior to fall drills."

DEPTCH CHARTS going into Monday's practice show Gator City's Phil Rogers, Tennessee High's George Heath and Elizabethton's Ron Davis scheduled to start on offense. Heath and Rogers will be the backs in the Wishbone attack.

Paul Adams, the "Black Ghost" from Castlewood, is listed at number two fullback behind Greg Toot and Church Hill's Keith Gibson is at number two guard.

CHARLIE MARTIN, the veteran senior utility man from Virginia Tech High, is listed as the starting nose guard and Lynn View's Brent Bledsoe is first unit defensive tackle. Appalachia's Tom Turner, who reported in with a pulled muscle, is at number two defensive tackle, another ex-Appy star, Ron "Flash" Davis, is listed as number two defensive back.

Other area players hoping to see action include wide receiver Mike Callison of Jonesboro, freshman split end Henry Bradley of Rogersville, wide receiver Johnny Goodwin of Elizabethton, tight end Luke Arangistic of Appalachia, defensive back Chuck Perdue of Graham and fullback Steve Scott of Erwin. Perdue is currently a second unit defensive back.

TECH'S OFFENSE, with Rogers ranking 20th in the nation a year ago with an average of 600 yards per game, appears potent — but the nagging doubt remains with the defense, which gave up an embarrassing total of 207 points in last year's 2-9 campaign.

"There's no doubt that our defense gained confidence in the spring," says Sharpe, "and we hope they'll become downright arrogant as the season progresses." Back headquarters as defensive end Kenny Lambert, the talented transfer from Tennessee who sat out last fall and was injured in the spring, are now ready to go.

Sharpe has lined up a hard-working young staff with solid football backgrounds.

Buddy Bennett, who gained defensive fame as the builder of "Bennett's Bandits" at ETSU, Tennessee, Arkansas and Georgia Tech, and former Jacksonville head coach Charlie Pell are on hand to build a defense.

Nelson Stokley, and Al Lowry, a pair of star quarter- backs in their collegiate heydays at LSU and Texas, respectively, are the offensive backfield coaches. And there are other promising young recruits like James Barber, Danny Ford, Jack White, Perry Willis, Terry Don Phillips, Bill Brown, Joe White and Derrick Weatherford on the staff.

The Gobblers are expecting a solid, crowd of 35,000 for the opener against Kentucky.