Sharpe wants Tech on ‘edge’

This is honing-down week at Virginia Tech. And when it’s all over, Coach Jimmy Sharpe hopes his Virginia Tech football squad might be a little sharper.

“We have in all our offense and defense, as far as assignments are concerned,” said the new head Gobbler. “Now comes the real important things such as honing down our techniques and execution.”

“There is a lot of difference in knowing what to do and actually doing it in the right tempo. That’s what we hope to accomplish this week.”

Sharpe and his staff have faced the same problem that any new head coach faces—time.

“We just don’t have enough time,” Sharpe said as he looked ahead to Tech’s big opener less than two weeks away (Sept. 14 at home to Kentucky). “We probably have been doing some of our freshmen an injustice. But we have done what we think is most important… we simply had to set some priorities.

The priorities set were to take the players with the most varsity experience and try to mold them into starting units for the opener. But Sharpe quickly admits he has a herd of raw freshman talent that will be pushing for starting positions before many games have gone on the boards.

The Tech staff has been working the known quantities in the way of players for the first segments of each of the two-a-day practices. Then the coaches have sent in the veterans, concentrated on the new prospects and tried to select those with the most potential for quick varsity service.

Bob McLelland
Sports Editor

Bush wearing a smile

One of the top freshmen has been Ricky Bush, a running back and defensive end at William Byrd. Bush is a player, in the words of Sharpe. He actually was recruited as a running back and possible defensive end.

But there was an acute shortage of size and ability at linebacker so Bush (6-4, 210) was given a shot at linebacker.

Sharpe told Bush he would work him there for a short period and evaluate his potential. If things didn’t work out, then Bush would be tried as a runner or defensive end.

“Man, he had it all thrown at him at once,” Sharpe said. “I know after a couple of days I asked him how it was going and he just said ‘whee, I never knew it would be like this.’

“But he has done well and he must be happy… he walks around with a smile on his face.”

Bush is now the No. 2 Sam linebacker. And his running mate on the second unit is another top freshman—Rick Razanno, a 5-11, 205-pounder from New Castle, Pa.

Several other freshmen are also in line for quick varsity service—running back Roscoe Coles of Virginia Beach, defensive tackle Greg Birtch, 6-5, 246 of East Aurora, N.Y.; and linebacker Terry Smith, 6-3, 215 of Richmond.

“But there will be others,” Sharpe quickly added. “If there aren’t we are in deep trouble.”

Three other Roanoke Metro players are fighting for varsity positions.

Mike Brammer, a 6-1, 220 sophomore from Patrick Henry, is being worked at both defensive guard and center.

Mike Poole, a 6-3, 190-pound sophomore from Lord Botetourt, is playing at tight end.

Rick Harman, a 5-11, 170 pound freshman who was All-State last year for 2-A champion Patrick Henry, is in the defensive secondary battle.

“They are coming along,” Sharpe said.

Kicking must improve

The kicking game was one of the big disappointments last spring and Sharpe has taken steps to correct the situation as much as possible.

“We have been going out early and working on the kicking game,” he said. “This is one department where we can’t afford to be weak. We are improving and I hope we continue to improve.”

Wayne Mc Daniels is the top punter as he was last year. He is getting competition from No. 1 quarterback Bruce Ariens, who Sharpe says is booting it like a pro. Another punter is tight end Kevin Dick.

The kicking duties will again fall on Wayne Latimer, who could become Tech’s all-time kick scoring leader if his leg holds out and the Tech offense cooperates.

Sharpe plans a big squad scrimmage Thursday and then a final dress rehearsal Saturday. By then Sharpe hopes to know more about his squad. He plans to spend next week in final preparations for the Wildcats.

The offense and defense are working on separate fields and each against Kentucky’s offense and defense.

Sharpe is a man who would like to use as many players as possible in each game. He wants to be especially deep at running back where the pounding will likely take its toll of the Gobbler runners, who also must be capable blockers in the veer options.

“We have to mature in a hurry,” Sharpe said. “We think we know who can and who can’t among the players we had here last spring. Our big goal now is to get as many freshmen ready as possible—but first of all we have to find the best football players in the group.”