Roscoe Coles: A Toy Soldier at Virginia Tech
By DENNIS LATTA
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BLACKSBURG — VMI might be the military school, but Virginia Tech will have a military man running back in the kickoff Saturday in the Tobacco Festival game in Richmond.

Fresneman Roscoe Coles of Virginia Beach is about as military-oriented as a student can be. His father is a career man in the Navy and Coles plans a career in the Army. But the fastrunning Coles decided to go to Tech instead of VMI, The Citadel or Navy.

"I started to go to The Citadel," Coles explained. "But I decided not to. I'd been in ROTC here my last two years, but I don't want it my first two because I had three years in high school."

The Keydets might end up wishing they had recruited Coles more heavily last year. "They didn't try to recruit me," Coles said. "I visited last year, but that was all. I was recruited heavily by Navy and thought about going there, but decided against it, too."

Coles had the fastest time in the 100 and 440 last year in track in AAA in Virginia. He ran the 100 in 9.6, but pulled a muscle before the state competition.

"I was recruited by a lot of schools such as Kansas State, South Carolina, North Carolina and Michigan," Coles said. "But they didn't me in football. I signed for football before the track season so no one recruited me in track," Coles pointed out.

Because of his speed, Tech Coach Jimmy Sharpe used Coles in any of the three positions in the future. For the remainder of this season, he'll be the kickoff returner and a running back.

"He could be a defensive back or a split end as well as a running back," Sharpe said. "We need him as a running back now. He'll be seeing a lot more playing time."

Coles has surprised people this year because he is too small for college football by most standards. He is 5-10, 184 pounds and even admits that he is not the same person he was last season.

"I'd like to gain about 10 pounds. I don't think it would slow me down. I'd like to play at about 175," the Bayside graduate claimed.

"Most schools didn't work hard to get Roscoe because he was too small," Coles said. "But I just thought he was good enough. We just thank God that we got him and that he decided to come here."

Coles started on the third team at Tech, but he was quickly recognized and moved up.

"I went up to the second team after three days and I guess that's where I am now. Coach Sharpe told me after the game last Saturday that I would be playing more. I'm really glad to hear it."

"I don't care where I'm playing as long as I'm playing," Coles said. "I played a defensive back some once, in high school so I'd be glad to play there. I was a receiver in my junior year and I averaged 19 yards a catch. I'll play anywhere they put me," Coles said.

One place the rookie will definitely play is on the returning end of the kickoffs. The Goblin coaching staff is impressed with the way he handles himself when he gets the ball.

"I was a little leery of using a freshman at the start of the season," Coach Sharpe said. "But I have no qualms now. I know he can do the job. I was just worried until he got a few licks in."

Coles was also worried in his first game. He didn't have any kicked to him until the third game and then it was a good kick."