Bigger Linemen, Good Prospects Highlight Football Recruiting

By Bill Mason
Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG—Good size, attitude and instinct are among the strong points of the new crop of football recruits bound for Virginia Tech, according to defensive assistant coach Charley Pell, who subbed for head football coach Jimmy Sharpe at the March 10 meeting of the Blacksburg Sports Club.

Listing size as one of Tech’s top needs, Pell contrasted the height and weight of some VPI linemen with that of their opposite numbers on one of the physically larger teams faced last season—West Virginia.

Some of the incoming linemen, he said, have or will develop the kind of size required to go against teams like West Virginia, Houston and Kentucky.

Linemen were not the top priority in recruiting, Pell said, listing the objectives in order of importance as getting top-quality quarterbacks, linebackers and linemen.

Six quarterbacks are on the list, possibly led in ability by Don LaRue of Galax, described as “possibly our hardest nosed quarterback.”

Pell said LaRue “definitely will get a shot at quarterback, but if you watched him play for Galax you know he can do a lot of things well.” LaRue also was a defensive standout.

Other quarterback recruits include David Lamie of Bristol and Gary Smith of Kingsport, Tenn., both rated fine ball handlers on the option and Smith, with 9.8 speed, especially dangerous on the run.

Gene Bunn of Virginia Beach also could fit in at running back or defensive back, Mike Zouzakl was described as a fine option thrower and Pell said that John Mason of Foley, Ala., “has all the physical tools.” Mason is a junior college transfer.

Joey Turner of Narrows and Ricky Casey of Pulaski both have promise on defense or could be used as fullbacks. Mike Roy is described as a prime prospect for nose guard, as is Leonard Walker.

Other recruits who could figure largely in Tech’s plans for the ’75 campaign include linemen Mike Stallings, Tom Hallett, 6-4 220 Ed Weaver of Galax, Grant Baker, Doug McDougald, “Sleepy” Johnson, and Charles Nobel. Also, Ricky White, Ray Brown, Ellis Savage, Paul Watkins, Chip Smith, running back Larry Fallon and fullback Greg Babb of New Martinsville, W. Va.

Pell described Johnson (6-6 220) and Walker (over six feet and 250) as having good speed for their size. He said that he is pleased with the overall speed of the defensive linemen and, “We think they all have the speed to be football players.”

Pell said Tech has been approaching Gate City running sensation Mickey Rogers mainly through his brother Phil, who is the Gobbler top runner. It’s expected that the younger Rogers will enroll in a prep school to play his final year of pre-college football and Pell added, “We hope to have him here in ’76.”

Tech has signed 29 of the allowed 30 recruits and “We won’t use the last one (scholarship) unless he’s a real hoss.”

In response to a question, Pell said Mitchell Barnes, Eddie Snell and Greg Multinax will form the core of Tech’s returning quarterback corps with Rusty Bailey, a redshirted quarterback last season, being shifted to defense.

Pell left the club, which will not meet again until shortly before the opening of the football season next September, with three important dates to remember:

April 21: Spring practice opens. Coach Sharpe said practice will be open, Pell relayed, and visitors will be welcome.

May 17: Tech’s Spring football game at Lane Stadium and a possible preview of the look of the 75 squad offensively and defensively.

Sept. 13: At Lexington, Ky., Virginia Tech opens its new season against the strong Kentucky Wildcats at Commonwealth Stadium.

Pell, who pinch hit when Sharpe had to be out of town, said of the last two dates: “I hope to see you at both places.”