The quarterback question for Virginia Tech wasn’t answered by Saturday’s game-type scrimmage, but it established one thing: The competition at that position is the keenest in recent years. As they say in TV’s endless detective shows, it is not an open and shut case.

While the quarterback position shares billing with the rest of the backfield in the run-oriented wishbone, it is still obviously the most vital trigger to the offense.

Regardless of who calls the shots, it will make little or no difference in total playing time for the dependable, durable senior Phil Rogers. The Gate City rambler gained over 1,000 yards as a sophomore and missed that mark due to injuries last season.

It’s safe to predict that Rogers is being counted on to provide much of Tech’s yardage, whether he keeps the ball as a quarterback or receives a handoff or pitchout from another signal caller. As Rogers goes, so goes Tech.

Of the sparse quarterbacking experience available on the squad, Mitchel Barnes has most, having done most of the fill-in work when Bruce Arians was injured.

Barnes, Greg Mullinax and Eddie Snell each ran the offense well. Barnes was authoritative, Mullinax showed increased quickness and Snell was quick and elusive, showing running ability that made us think of Jimmy Sharpe’s description of the moves of a good runner: cutting and slashing.

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Offense is only half the game and Tech’s defense is alive and growing. It showed its teeth early in Saturday’s clash when the defense stopped the offense convincingly on a goal line stand. John Groover and Keith McCarter were two of a host of stoppers we noticed while on the sidelines, alternately shooting pictures and leaping out of the way of runners or their defensive pursuers.

With its emphasis on swift running, the wishbone is nobody’s minuet.

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The atmosphere of the pre-preseason game—any game before the official spring game May 17—is informal in the extreme. Coaches stand on the playing field for the kind of close-up assessment of progress not afforded in other situations.

On one offensive lineup, two white-jerseyed backs lined up on the same side of the line with their orange-jerseyed quarterback. Identification of who did what wasn’t possible since numbers haven’t yet been assigned and no numerical roster is likely to be available before the 17th.

A small but interested crowd (admission was free) watched Saturday, and its numbers doubtless will increase for the scrimmage planned for next Saturday. The first game-type scrimmage ought to close attendance battle with a carnival that played the Lane Stadium parking lot.

It’s far too early to know, but we believe that when the month’s pass, the carnivals fold their tents and move on and the 30,000 plus crowds fill the stadium, Tech will demonstrate that its wishbone has backbone. And it’s more bone than wish.