The first pass he threw this spring,’ said Sharpe. ‘was a dead interception to the strong safety. He didn’t trust the safety right. Three plays later, he called the same play. He read the safety exactly right and popped the ball out to a back, and he got a 12-yard gain out of it.

‘He’s got good football sense, and he’s learning more and more.’

To assist in the transition, Sharpe has assigned Bruce Arias to Rogers as almost a full-time teacher. Arias, last year’s quarterback who has exhausted his eligibility, was not a gifted athlete, but he gave the Hokies what Sharpe called “mature leadership.”

And if leadership qualities can be taught, Arias is the kind of person who can teach them.

AT THE MOMENT, Rogers’ main problem at quarterback is quite basic — he is having occasional trouble with the snap. ‘Nothing happens unless you can handle that,’ Rogers said. ‘To help overcome the situation, Sharpe said Rogers is taking “300 to 400 snaps per day” in practice. ‘I’ve been pleased with Phil’s intensity in wanting to learn,’ said Sharpe.

The Tech coach said he has no doubts Rogers can handle the physical aspects of his new position. But a triple-option quarterback must be able to handle the mental aspect of the option, and that’s where Arias will be a big help.

Rogers must be able to read the defense and decide whether to hand off or throw the ball. He must be able to throw back to a fullback or to give it to a tailback.

But you have to do so many other things. In Sharpe’s opinion, Rogers is going to do them. ‘I have no doubts he can be a great one,’ said Sharpe. ‘He’s pretty damn closer right now. He has come a long way since we started spring practice.’

Tech fans can judge for themselves Rogers’ progress when the Hokies have their squad game Saturday at Lane Stadium. ‘I’m still a little shaky at quarterback,’ said Rogers. ‘I hope I don’t disappoint anybody.’

Rogers’ efforts won’t be for naught. The Hokies’ spring game is Saturday at Lane Stadium. Not only will the Hokies get a chance to see Rogers in action, but they’ll also get a chance to see the Hokies’ new offensive line.

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He must “read” the tackle and then decide whether to hand off to the fullback or to pitch it in. He must “read” the linebackers and the corners to determine passing coverage. And he must do it all in the first precious seconds after the snap. But the triple option is just another offense that looks good on paper.

Everything about playing quarterback is different from being a running back,” said Rogers. “What I like best about playing quarterback is that you don’t have to block.”

THE EXPERIMENT: Phil Rogers Hands Off to Back Roscoe Cole.