Sharpe looking for football players

By BOB McLELLAND
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Coach Jimmy Sharpe came right to the point about Virginia Tech spring football practice.

"We right now have only 12 to 18 kids we can win with," he said. "We hope we can develop at least 25 by the time we finish spring practice. But that still isn't enough."

"We simply don't have that great natural talent, so we must work our butts off to develop as much as possible. We have to sell these kids on the idea that hard work and dedication will make up for a lot of weaknesses."

"That's why we must spend three hours in practice instead of the usual, hour and one-half. We must sell the kids on the idea they can win but they must do three things—outfit, outquick and outfight our opponents."

"Today marked the midway point in Tech's spring drills. It was practice day No. 10 and Sharpe and his assistants were to send the squad of 106, including 80 scholarship boys and walk-ons, through a lengthy game-type scrimmage."

This was also examination day for the Gobblers—the day Sharpe and his aides decide who will and who probably will not play next fall.

The staff will study films and grade individuals. Then comes the selection of the players to whom about 70 per cent of the coaching and attention will be directed during the final 10 days of spring practice.

The select group, Sharpe said, likely will include 16 defensive and 21 offensive players.

"If not that we will ignore the other kids," Sharpe said. "It's just that we will work more with those who have shown the most interest in practice and look like they are ready to play."

"One thing has impressed Sharpe—the enthusiasm of the squad."

"They seem to love practicing and working," he said. "I think they realize, as we coaches do, that Wednesday will be a day off. Thursday will be another game-type scrimmage and Friday will be a learning and review session. Another big scrimmage is set for next Saturday."

The final week will find the Gobblers using the first three days preparing for the Kentucky opener next fall. Thursday, the squad will be divided for the spring game. The teams will spend that day and the next working for the finale Saturday May 17.

There have been several big surprises thus far among the squad. Sharpe pointed especially to fullback Bill King of Radford, running back Chuck Nuttycomb, tight end Dave Dolphin, linebackers Gerald Sheehan and Steve Scott and center Blair Busskirk.

"Right now Sharpe thinks his strongest positions will be running back and defensive secondary. He rated the defensive ends and linebackers as good and above average. The offensive line is good but needs more depth. The defensive front three probably is causing the most concern."

"Tom Beasley gives us an outstanding down lineman," Sharpe said. "But we have to find three or four more to go with him."

Sharpe likes to conduct his spring practices as something of an open house for high school coaches and fans and alumni.

"Tell everyone we welcome them to our practices," he said. "I know we have especially enjoyed having the high school coaches. They agree with us that there is a world of difference between this spring and last. We spent last spring just learning the player names."

Weekday practices begin at 4 p.m., Saturday scrimmages at 1.

"The welcome mat is out," Sharpe said.

...they need the extra work to be winners. They are willing to pay the price..."

Sharpe has his practice schedule for the next two weeks already planned. Monday and Tuesday will be review days with work on fundamentals.