Tech employs facemask Bandit

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BLACKSBURG — Keith McCarter has spent the last two autumns as a Virginia Tech defensive end, but this coming fall he’s changing occupations. He’s going to be a bandit.

But McCarter hopes the only people calling for police assistance after he’s done working will be Tech’s football opposition. That’s because he’ll be doing his banditry on the Hokies’ defensive line.

“A bandit and a defensive end is the very same thing,” said McCarter, who will try his new role under game conditions tomorrow in Tech’s annual spring intrasquad contest at Lane Stadium. “Bandit is just an expression used. What I really am is the weakside defensive end. The strongside end is called an anchor.”

The 1:30 p.m. game will bring an end to the Hokies’ spring drills, and Coach Jimmy Sharpe has basically broken down his squad into even halves for the game. The Headhunters will be headed by the first-team defense, which includes McCarter. The Mean Machine is the other half of the squad, and includes the No. 1 offensive unit.

“We’re going to have to stop Phil Rogers,” said McCarter of the Tech running star who has made the move to quarterback. “You might say we’ll be looking for him.”

McCarter also feels that men in the backfield will be easier for him to find this season. The defensive switch that makes him the Bandit involves movement for McCarter dictated by the opposition offense.

“As the weakside end, I’ll always play away from the offensive formation of the other team,” explained McCarter. “It’s just like the cornerbacks, and should give me a better chance at pursuit.”

“Another thing is that I won’t be going against the tight end so much. This means I’ll be able to concentrate more on pass rush and pass coverage. Most of the time the fullback or a halfback will be blocking on me. I spent most of the time last year facing the tight end.”

The 6-3, 200-pound Colonial Heights native is playing five pounds heavier this spring than he did last season and has been encouraged by the accomplishments made in preparation for 1975.

“I guess the biggest thing is that the players are much closer now. We know each other a lot better than last year,” said McCarter, a two-time letterman. “Last year we worried a lot about what the other guy was going to do.”

“Now we know that if one of us makes a mistake, another guy will make up for it. And that really helps us on defense. We have to get better. We took a lot of blame last year, and we don’t want it to happen again.”

McCarter, who started nine games for the 4-7 Hokies in 1974, said he has spent most of the spring working on his mental agility.

“I’m trying to recognize stuff much quicker,” said the defensive end, who will be a junior next season. “You want to get in the habit of doing things. In the past I’ve had to think before I did something. It should be automatic.”