Depth big problem for Tech's Sharpe

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BLACKSBURG—Jimmy Sharpe was a busy man Saturday, but nowhere near as hurried as he's going to be in three months.

That's when Virginia Tech will open drills for the start of the 1975 football season on Sept. 13 against Kentucky. And the Gobblers' coach knows a lot is going to have to be accomplished in those days the last of August and early September.

"About the best thing we have going for us now is attitude," said Sharpe after viewing Tech's Spring Intrasquad game as a very interested spectator. "We're not going to be very deep, but things will get better. And we need help especially at linebacker and on the defensive line."

Sharpe was all over Lane Stadium for the contest, which wrapped up the 20 days of spring drills. He started the game on the photographer's level atop the pressbox. Then he watched most of the first half in the pressbox before heading down to field level.

There he stood at the sidelines most of the time. But at one point, Sharpe managed to wander down behind the end zone at the scoreboard end of the field. You might say he was taking in all the angles.

"The offense stopped itself more often than the defense stopped the offense," said Sharpe, describing the conditions perfectly in the Mean Machine's 31-13 triumph over the Headhunters. "But I'm not really concerned about that happening. It often does in the spring."

The Mean Machine, headed by the Gobblers' No. 1 offensive unit, finally got moving in the second half. It was the same time converted running back Phil Rogers began to run things more smoothly at quarterback.

While Sharpe was not pleased with the way his experiment to move the Tech running star to the signal-caller's post came out, the Gobbler coach also intends to keep an open mind on the position. Mitch Barnes and John Mason both performed creditably at quarterback for the Headhunters. Mason's passing (5-for-10 for 91 yards) got special mention from Sharpe.

But while the offenses failed to move on both sides, the defenses did come up with some stellar workouts. Three in particular were offered by linebacker Rick Razzano and linemen Tom Beasley and Stuart Patterson.

"The defense has certainly improved this spring," added Sharpe. "We have a lot of front line people we know can play football. But we need some more help. I was very pleased with the performance of the folks we know can play. And as far as execution was concerned, I'd say we were pretty good.

"When we come back in August, I'd have to say our No. 1 priority will be to work on our kicking game. We need lots of work there. What we also have to do is develop those young players. They just have to play more to be winners."

One part of the kicking game that needed no improvement on Saturday was the punting of Bruce McDaniel, who will be a senior in the fall. McDaniel averaged 39.6 yards per kick on 53 punts last year. Saturday he punted five times for a 45-yard average including a 57-yarder that outbooted the coverage downfield.

Sharpe also noted the injury factor, which on the offensive line and at linebacker had so depleted things that no help was available from scholarship players.

Sharpe's only other wish is that the Gobblers return in the fall with the same attitude they displayed this spring.

"The best part of the spring was the intense attitude," said Sharpe, whose team will play three of its first four games in 1975 on the road. "Down on that field you could just see how they were playing against each other.

"Now if we can put them all together and say those mothers on the other side of the field are our enemies and play like that, then we're halfway there."

"Jimmy Sharpe"