Tech Quarback Situation Improved

BY DENNIS LATTAN SPORTS WRITER

BLACKSBURG — The Virginia Tech coaches aren’t worried. They feel like they have the right man, maybe even the right two or three men for the job.

But they seem to be the only ones who aren’t worried about the question of what Tech is going to do for a quarterback this season.

“We are in the best shape we’ve been in since we’ve been here,” claimed Nelson Stokley, the Hokies’ offensive coordinator. “Our quarterback situation has definitely improved. We have the best two kids we’ve had since we’ve been here.”

Those two players are David Lamie, a junior from Bristol, and Don (Frenchy) LaRue, a sophomore from Galax. Lamie will probably be Tech’s starting QB, but LaRue will be playing almost as much.

“I have confidence in them,” said Tech head Coach Jimmy Sharpe. “I agree that we’re better off than we’ve been in the past. We have not one but two players who can get the job done.”

Lamie and LaRue were running neck-and-neck last fall for the job of No. 2 quarterback behind Michael Barnes. But LaRue was injured and redshirted for a year. Lamie picked up some experience during the season, which is the big reason why he’ll be the starter.

“David does a little better overall,” Stokley said. “Don does a good job, but David has a little edge on him. David didn’t get much experience but every little bit helps.”

“In almost every category, David is ahead. For Don, running the football is his strong point. Don is a little more capable of going the whole way because he’s faster. He’s as fast in full uniform as he is in shorts,” Stokley continued. “But while David doesn’t have the breakaway speed, he’s quick” the offensive coach pointed out.

The Tech coaches are enjoying the competition between the two top candidates for quarterback. “Like at any position, competition is making them work that much harder,” Stokley noted.

“They’re pulling for each other and that’s a real good sign,” Sharpe said. “They have confidence in each other and in themselves. I think that’s a real good sign.”

Playing the No. 3 spot at quarterback for the Hokies will probably be sophomore Mike Zonaiak. Sophomore Allen Brown of Petersburg is running even with Zonaiak now, but the odd’s are good that Brown will be redshirted this year.

“If we feel that another year would give him the experience he needs, we’ll do it,” said Stokley.

From the freshman crop, Tech will have Jeff Manry (4-4) and Dave Smialekay. Manry enrolled last spring and participated in spring practice and the spring game.

But Lamie and LaRue will be the men when the season starts with Texas A&M visiting Lane Stadium. “We like to have two quarterbacks ready to go and ready to play. Then we’d like to have another one get in there some,” Stokley said.

“With the two we have now, we can do anything. In the past, we’ve had to make some changes to fit the quarterback, but we don’t have that problem this year.”

“There is nothing we have to take out. They can run any type of plays we want. This is the first year we’ve had this and it should be a big help.”

If the Hokies are to be throwing passes more this season, like they say they’ll be doing the quarterback will need to be able to run, pass, pitch out and even carry the water buckets. “It’s still the wishbone, but we’ve added some new dimensions and our quarterbacks will fit in well,” Sharpe said.

If Tech’s quarterbacks don’t come through this year, the heat will be on Sharpe and Stokley for not recruiting any stars at the position.

“We decided we wouldn’t sign a quarter-
back unless we thought he could come in and beat out the guys we’ve got,” Sharpe said. “We didn’t want a quarterback who couldn’t help us.”

“The problem is finding one that’s good enough and then signing him,” Stokley observed. “There just aren’t that many good quarterbacks coming out of high school. Hopefully, we’ve got a good enough position where a kid doesn’t have to come in and play right away. We can bring them along slowly.”

“Like with Manry. He has tremendous potential. All he needs is experience. We don’t have to throw him in there” Stokley reasoned.

Tech Notes: It will be a while before the spot of fullback is settled for the Hokies. Junior Dickie Holloway is listed on the first team now, but four freshmen are working behind him and might catch him early in the season.

Lewis Stuart of Floyd, Steve Ward of Alexandria, Bob Vories of Irvington, N.J., and Mike Romagnoli of Mechanicsburg, Pa., are working there. The Tech staff even considered taking Mickey Rogers at the spot, but decided against it.

The Hokies work out in pads for the first time this afternoon. They have just two weeks in pads before the first game, which doesn’t make the coaches too happy.