Some Injuries, But Overall Grid Picture Is Bright At Virginia Tech, White Says

BLACKSBURG—Some Virginia Tech players have been injured and will miss at least the first few games of the season but the overall physical picture is good for the Hokies, going into their final week of workouts before the opening game against the nationally ranked Aggies of Texas A&M.

Linebacker Mike Stollings is hospitalized with a fresh outbreak of an old medical problem and cornerback Gary Smith has a shoulder separation (see separate story) but “the squad as a whole came back in the best shape since coach Sharpe has been here.”

Joe White, academic counselor and Tech recruiter, spoke before the Blacksburg Sports Club Monday in place of head coach Jimmy Sharpe, who was conducting a team practice that still was underway at noon.

White also related that Tech’s “three on three” drills in which three offensive and three defensive linemen go against each other “Have been the finest three on three drills I’ve ever seen” had high praise from some young linemen, some of them freshmen.

Coach White noted that 6’2 240 freshman linemen Bucky Methfessel “will be one of the smartest students who will go to school here,” Methfessel had an outstanding academic record in high school and is contemplating a double major at Tech. “The coach added that he has done well in all courses in one case against a player who had him outweighed by 30 pounds.

Another freshman, Ron Zollicoffer, 6’2 180 wide receiver from Virginia Beach, caught a touchdown pass in last Saturday’s scrimmage and “definitely will play against Texas A&M.”

White observed that four freshman fullback candidates—Bob Vorhies, Alexandria, Steve Wirt, Pennsylvania Mike Ross and Loyd County’s Lewis Stuart “Have come a long way and Stuart has shown good speed and has been very impressive so far. Blacksburg’s Salyer Smollett has worked very hard but has a lot to learn.”

A new coming for praise were freshman linemen Gentry Smith of Virginia Tech’s swift-footed fleet of defensive cornerbacks, was injured in last Saturday’s scrimmage and will be out of action for at least three weeks and likely will miss Tech’s opener Sept. 17 against Texas A&M and the first road game at Memphis State.

The race still is on for starting quarterback, he said, although David Lamie has been the #1 choice since coach Sharpe has been here.

In response to a question from a club member he said that Tech has had “no academic casualties.” White added “Regardless of what you may have seen in the Roanoke Times, “every one of our (freshman) prospects showed up and none has left.” A few days later the coach was decided that football is not for them.

White said that he was glad Of Tech has signed running back Lawrence Young of Madison “who was recruited by Maryland and Richmond. He reminded you of Roscoe (Coles). He is small but he can run and go to the outside well. With the backs we have now we can go to the right and left well and get outside easily.”

The counselor mentioned some other players. “Rick Razzano defensive leader and a slight edge, “Don LaRue has done very well.” (LaRue scored a touchdown in “Saturday’s scrimmage.”)

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The second half produced a stiffer defense by the first and an offense that managed a 14-yard touchdown by Accountant, a 20-yard, last-period scoring drive by junior running back Dennis Scott and a 33-yard field goal by junior Paul (Chile bean) Engle.

The best had prevailed, and Coach Jimmy Sharpe was pleased.

Recounting Tech’s paper-thin ranks of 774, Sharpe expressed satisfaction with the increasing quality of depth he now sees.

“We’ve got some young’uns that are going to help us,” he declared.

One of those certainly is Zollicoffer, but at the moment Sharpe was referring more specifically to several interior linemen who by Tech’s general physical stature have unusual height and weight.

In each of the last three seasons Tech has had at least half a dozen freshmen earn monograms, but at the moment it appears likely that there might be a larger number of frosh to letter in ‘77.

Scoring Came Often In Tech Scrimmage Game

BLACKSBURG—Early pre-season scrimmages pitting the “best” against the “rest” usually have amounted to building confidence for Virginia Tech’s first offensive and defensive units, but last Saturday was a whole new ball game.

The third time the best got the ball, a 24-yard dash by Roscoe Coles, senior running back, brought a 74-yard, 11-play march, with Coles making the score on a short plunge.

The next time the best scored was midway in the third period.

It took “the rest” just four plays to even the count in the first quarter, and they did it on a play which turned out to be a mixed blessing.

They did it on a 41-yard pass from redshirt sophomore quarterback Don LaRue to freshman wide receiver Ron Zollicoffer who made an exceptional catch. On the play, junior cornerback Gary Smith suffered a dislocated shoulder, and he will be out of action for at least 2-3 weeks and maybe for the entire season.

The next time “the rest” got the ball, LaRue engineered a 75-yard drive with a key play of a 33-yard pass to Zollicoffer. LaRue scored a TD on a nine-yard sweep.

The possibility of extending Sports Club meetings past the end of basketball season and honoring Tech spring sports athletes will be explored. The Club plans an ice cream treat for Tech’s football players at 4 PM today at the practice field to demonstrate its support of the 777 Hokies who head into their final week of practice before opening the season Sept. 17 at home against national power Texas A&M.

SMITH IS INJURED—Gary Smith, one of Virginia Tech’s swift-footed fleet of defensive cornerbacks, was injured in last Saturday’s scrimmage and will be out of action for at least three weeks and likely will miss Tech’s opener Sept. 17 against Texas A&M and the first road game at Memphis State.

MAY MISS SEASON—Linebacker Mike Stollings recently suffered a recurrence of a medical problem that has caused him to leave Virginia Tech earlier.

Stollings had been listed as a starter for the Hokies.