Tech Finds 'Pipeline'

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BLACKSBURG — You don't carry coals to New Castle, but Virginia Tech has learned you do take football players from there.

The Gobblers have three players from the Pennsylvania city by that name, and Tech offensive guard John Latina says the pipeline from the north hasn't run dry yet.

"I guess I'm the end of the line right now," said Latina, who along with former New Castle High teammates Rick Razzano and Nick Rapone play big parts for the Gobblers. "There's one guy up there right now that's being recruited. He's a defensive back—Stuart McMunn. I know we're going after him."

Latina, 6-0 and 235 pounds, followed Razzano and Rapone to Blacksburg after playing for Coach Lindy Lauro at New Castle. Among the influencing factors in their choice of Tech was Chuck Cuba, a Gobbler center in the 1950s and now Lauro's assistant at New Castle.

"There's a real football tradition at New Castle," said Latina, who is in his first season as a Tech starter. "I guess the main reason I came to Virginia Tech was because Rick and Nick were here ahead of me. I visited other places, but the facilities impressed me here. Not too many places have an indoor practice field like we do here."

Laboring under the obscurity of the offensive line, Latina talks at ease about his role on a team that's been less than successful in 1977. After all, a guard's biggest opportunity to star is on the games films reviewed by coaches on Sunday.

"We've played a tough schedule this year," said Latina, trying to explain the troubles of a team that takes a 1-6-1 record to West Virginia this weekend. "We've played four teams in the top 20 (Texas A&M, Clemson, Kentucky and Florida State) and in past years people said we maybe didn't play a very good schedule.

"We've only been beaten soundly by two teams—Clemson and Kentucky. We just haven't gotten any big breaks. It's about time things started going our way."

Tech's switch to the I-formation two weeks ago at Kentucky was no problem for the offensive linemen, claimed Latina. And now that the Gobblers have returned to the

wishingbone, that line has lost a very good blocker as Mickey Fitzgerald has been switched from tight end to fullback.

"The way we switched to the 'I' made it easy for the linemen," said Latina. "The blocking schemes were basically the same as we had earlier, and I don't think we made very many mistakes on the line at Kentucky. The coaches only put in about 10-15 plays anyway.

"We'll miss Mickey on the line. He was a very, very good blocker, maybe the best one-on-one guy we had. But at fullback, he played a great game against Florida State."

With three games to play, the Gobblers' have been assured a losing season. But Latina said he hopes his teammates realize that 1977 is not over yet.

"About all we can play for now is pride," said the dark-haired junior guard. "Hopefully, things will starting turning out good for us.

"The last three games (home contests with Wake Forest and VMI after the visit to WVU) can still mean something. The seniors could go out with some wins for one thing. And we can build a foundation for next season.

"We lost our last three games a year ago. Then there's this season. I don't know if what we did last year carried over, but it would be a lot better to start next year with some good thoughts left from this year."

TECH TALK: Gobblers' running back Roscoe Coles now has 3,311 career rushing yards, ranking 24th on the all-time Division I list. Another 77 yards would lift Coles to 18th . . . Gene Bunn, Tech's junior defensive back from Virginia Beach, intercepted the 13th pass of his career last week to tie the school's career record set by Ron Davidson (1966-68) . . . Coles now has 28 career touchdowns via the rush, one shy of the school record 29 held by current Tech football administrative assistant J.B. Barber . . . The Gobblers have not won in Morgantown since 1967, having lost two straight there after the series was interrupted for four seasons.