Players Supporting Sharpe

There was no doubt about how the Tech players felt about their blond 38-year-old coach. They were solidly behind him.

Fullback Mickey Fitzgerald, the catalyst of Tech's late-season turnaround, said he might transfer if Sharpe is fired.

"If he goes, I'll go," said the bulldozing sophomore fullback. "I would seriously think right away about transferring. I'd be that disappointed in Tech. He's one of the best men I've been associated with."

Senior linebacker Rick Razzano, the heart of Tech's defense during Sharpe's coaching career, said he planned to call Dr. Lavery Saturday night to discuss the coaching situation.

"I'll ask him what the chances are of keeping Coach Sharpe," said Razzano. "I'll tell him, 'You know how the team feels about him.' If Dr. Lavery decides to keep him, he'll have to be strong, because he'll catch a lot of (bleep).

"If he keeps him one more year, he'll come out a winner."

Sharpe, red-faced after battling the brutal cold (the chill factor in the biting wind was 30 degrees below), pointed to some figures written in chalk on a blackboard.

"That's the truth," he said. "Nobody realizes how close we are to really having something here."

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 Brill Column

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On the board were written these figures:
- "1974 — 17 points from 9-2.
- "1975 — 6 points from 10-1.
- "1977 — 13 points from 8-3.
- "Four years—48 points from 35-9."

In Sharpe's four seasons, Tech actually is 21-22-1, but at least 13 of the losses have been by eight points or less.

Clearly, however, the 3-7-1 season following two winning campaigns will not play a major role in any decision Lavery makes. No football coach would be fired for one losing season.

If Sharpe, who has four years left on his contract, is not retained, a key factor will be the unfortunat August night in Salem when Sharpe apparently was intoxicated at a meeting of the Roanoke Valley Sports Club.

Has the uncertainty over his position had any effect on recruiting?

"Strangely, no," said Sharpe. "Our coaches have been real excited over the reception they have been getting. We haven't heard anything (negative) at all."

Would an assuring word from Lavery help things?

"It would make things a lot easier," said Sharpe, who has had nothing easy all year.

And so, the immediate future of Jimmy Sharpe rests with 46-year-old Dr. William E. Lavery. Only one thing appears certain—nobody will have very long to wait.

Virginia Tech cannot afford that luxury.