Will start at linebacker

Tech's Agemy a little nervous now

By JIM STEINMILLER
Staff Writer

Jamel Agemy's words came spewing forth in rapid-fire succession — an obvious case of pre-game jitters.

Saturday night, the Wake Forest offense will officially welcome the Virginia Tech linebarker to major college football. His role is replacing one of Tech's best defensive players, Mike Johnson, now a member of the United States Football League champion Philadelphia Stars.

Agemy realizes he has a big responsibility, and the red-shirt freshman doesn't waste a bit of breath admitting he's a little more than scared.

"I found out Saturday night, after a big scrimmage, that I was listed number one on the depth chart," Agemy said after practice Wednesday. "I said to myself, 'Jamel, it's time to buckle up baby ... you're a starter.' I'm praying to God that I'll do my best."

Agemy will be playing next to more Paul Nelson, the Hokies other new linebarker. It is the only defensive position where the Hokies lack experience, although Nelson was a member of Tech's specialty teams last season.

What makes the decision to start Agemy so surprising is he only practiced for 12 days last spring. He suffered a knee injury and was forced to watch the bulk of the workouts from the sidelines. Fortunately, he didn't need surgery.

"I was in the process of tackling Eddie Hunter on a backside play," he said. "He started to cut back and somebody else got a piece of the running back, too, and took my knee apart. After that I had to learn from the sidelines and it's hard to get a whole lot by watching."

"I don't have any problems with my legs now. I'm just nervous about the game. There's a lot of pressure being a starter ... replacing Mike Johnson. I think I can fill his shoes ... well, I hope I can. If I wasn't capable of doing the job, I wouldn't be the starter."

Johnson led Tech with 13 tackles last season. And when Agemy arrived in Blacksburg from Hollywood, Fla., in August of 1983, he befriended the senior linebarker.

"Mike helped me a lot," he said. "He told me that no matter what happens, never quit. He also helped me with my steps, technique and understanding this defense."

Agemy, 5-foot-11½ and 208 pounds, was recruited by former Tech linebarker coach Lou Tepper. He was an all-state selection in Florida and was chosen as the Miami Herald's Defensive Player of the Year. At the time, he'd never heard of Virginia Tech.

"I was impressed by the school," he said. "I got a good feel for it and decided it would be a great place to play."

Although he lacks outstanding speed, Agemy's quick. He impressed the Tech coaches by finishing 18th in Hokies' off-season strength and endurance competition. He now wants to impress Wake Forest.

"I'm sure Wake is going to come at us (the linebarkers) right away," he said. "We've spent a lot of time in practice working on the things Wake might do and I've studied last year's films. But I know that they will throw some new things my way."

"I'm scared that by game time I'm going to forget all the things I've learned. The other guys have told me though, that once you make that first hit, all the nervousness disappears."

TECH NOTES: Veteran offensive tackle Stuart Plank sustained a broken foot in practice Wednesday and will be lost to the team for five or six weeks.