Tech's Austin lost for season

■ True freshman Green to take his place at cornerback

By ROBERT ANDERSON
Bristol Herald Courier
BLACKSBURG — Virginia Tech's defense just got Greener.

Tech coach Frank Beamer said Tuesday an MRI has revealed that starting cornerback Larry Austin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee and will miss the rest of the season.

Austin is scheduled for surgery Friday at Montgomery Regional Hospital in Christiansburg. He will be replaced in the lineup for Saturday's noon homecoming game against Temple by Eric Green, a true freshman from Clewiston, Fla.

Austin, a redshirt junior from Norfolk, had started all four games this year for the third-ranked Hokies.

"It's definitely a setback," Beamer said. "You're starting a true freshman. Eric Green is a talented guy, and I don't think he's a typical true freshman, but he is a true freshman. Our young defense just got a little younger.

Green has been impressive this year for Tech, intercepting a pass and blocking a punt in the Hokies' 49-0 victory over Rutgers at home three weeks ago.

Beamer and his coaching staff are more confident using Green than promoting Austin's listed backup, redshirt freshman Gar- nell Wilks. Tech will slide wide- side corner Ronnie Whitaker into Austin's position on the "boundary" side and insert Green into the lineup.

"I think this is going to be our best combination," Beamer said. "Ronny is plenty tough enough to go in there and make some tackle- les in the boundary."

Tech has been very fortunate during recent seasons in avoiding high attrition rate due to injury.

"Exactly," Beamer said. "We've been very fortunate around here for awhile.

Green, who first learned of Aus- tin's injury on Tech's Internet site, believes he is up to the challenge of his first career start.

"It puts a lot of pressure on, but being that I was a high school quarterback, that's a lot of pres- sure right there," Green said. "I'm used to the pressure.

"He was not expecting the call.

"I didn't expect 'em to put a true freshman out there, because there's not too many true fresh- men out there playing big-time college football," Green said. "I was surprised and happy at the same time."

See TECH: Page 58

NOTING THE NUMBERS:
Tech is ranked in the top 1 in Division I-A in five statistical cat- egories. The Hokies are second in rushing (327.0), third in scoring, fourth in punt returns and inter- ceptions and ninth in total of- fense. ... Andre' Davis ranks No. 1 nationally in punt returns with a 26.9-yard average. ... Tailback Lee Suggs and Vick are 18th and 20th respectively in rushing.

TECH October 4

Green, who played at the same high school that produced former Tech cornerback Anthony Midget and current Hokie linebacker Phillip Summers, originally com- mitted to West Virginia where he planned to play wide receiver.

"They had some older guys who were going to be leaving. Really, I wasn't sure that's what I wanted to do, then the coach that was recruiting me — Doe Holliday — left and went to N.C. State.

"That helped me out a lot, be- cause I had Tech on my mind all the time. Me and mom talked about it. Day after day, we prayed about it. After that coach left, that really made me make up my mind.

Tech defensive line coach Char- ley Wills, who recruits that part of Florida, came in and closed the deal.

"He really got in good with my family," Green said. "He was a big part of my coming here. He still keeps in touch with my mom."

HOME IMPROVEMENT: In- side linebacker Jake Houseright, a junior from Gate City, earned Tech's "hammer award" in Satur- day's 48-34 victory over Boston College.

Tech actually gives a painted hammer to the player who deliv- ers the most crunching blow to an opponent during each game. The 6-foot-3, 237-pound Houseright got his hardware for drilling Jim Hasselbeck as the Boston College quarterback released a pass late in the second quarter.

It was the first time Houseright had cleanly nailed an unprotected QB.

"That's really my first clear- one," Houseright said. "I kind of had one on Rutgers, but I pulled off. I didn't really hit him because they were yelling a lot about hit- ting the quarterback so I didn't want to get a flag.

Houseright, who is second on the team in total tackles, had a bigger play in the second half, stopping William Green for a 2- yard loss as part of a goal-line stand after BC had a first down at the Tech 1.

"That was a big stand for us as a defense," Houseright said. "I think it kind of characterized us a little bit. That was a big turning point for us. I figured they would try to run to try to prove a point a little bit."

HAY NOW: After Boston Col- lege players were slow to let Tech quarterback Michael Vick up after a first-half tackle, they got some unexpected help. One BC defender was sent flying by a Hokie who didn't like what he was seeing.

"That was me," Tech senior guard Josh Redding said. "I was pretty angry. He was on top of Vick, just yelling in his ear. I just grabbed him and chuckled him like a bale of hay."

HAPPY HOMECOMING: One alumna who is expected to be on hand Saturday is former Tech quarterback Bob Schiebkeirt, who led the team in passing and rushing in 1983. Vick's 210-yard effort against BC broke the old single-game mark for a Tech quarterback Schiebkeirt set with 204 yards against Richmond.

MORE INJURIES: Backup de- fensive tackle Channel Reed also will miss Saturday's game, which should give more minutes to true freshman Kevin Lewis. ... Walk-on tight end Seth Noekester suf-fered a torn ACL in his left knee last week and also will undergo surgery Friday.