By DAVID BISSET
Sports Writer

After a ten year absence, University of Southern Mississippi head coach Bobby Collins will return to Blacksburg Saturday, only this time he'll be walking the visitors' sideline and hoping that his Golden Eagles can bounce back from last week's humiliating loss at East Carolina.

"I know all about the atmosphere at Tech," declared Collins in an interview Tuesday afternoon. I was at Tech in 1964, '65, and '66 as an assistant coach and the Hokies have got to be ranked as one of the top teams to beat when they are at home."

Along with Collins at USM are two former Tech assistant coaches and the starting quarterback, Ken Alderman, who hails from Radford.

"I think Billy Clay and Jim Weatherford and Alderman are quite familiar with the Tech atmosphere. But we've played our last 25 games on the road and since I've been at the helm (January '75), we haven't done so poorly as far as winning games."

What Collins says about his team not playing on the USM campus in the last three years is true. The USM stadium has been renovated and the team has been forced into playing all games on the road.

"Our stadium will be ready for us this year and we are suppose to dedicate it next Saturday when we host Ole Miss."

"However, we're not looking ahead to that game, but our coaching staff and the squad must prepare for the Tech game on Saturday. Coach Sharpe has a big, strong and physical team and they simply look awesome on film," noted Collins.

"They look even bigger than last year's squad and with Rick Razzano and Tom Beasley shoring up defense that they may be very hard to score upon."

"I haven't seen any of Tech's weak points. (Mitchel), Barnes gives you an added dimension because he can rifle that ball as well as direct the team. And Coles keeps coming at you all the time. They (the Hokies) can alternate their fullbacks (Paul Adams and George Heath), all afternoon because they've got so much talent."

"For us to stop them we have to improve from last week's shelling. Against East Carolina we had one of those long nights where we were down three quick touchdowns and our club never got any momentum going to get back into the game."

As far as talent goes Collins has four players that can lug the football. This includes senior Ben "Go Go" Garry 6-1, 193, and senior Carlos Montgomery 6-1, 202 along with Curtis Dickey 6-0, 198 and speedster Chuck Clary 5-1, 183.

"We lost three-year starter Jeff Bower, but Alderman has done exceptionally well for us. He's shown us that he can lead this team and he's got a good arm and that will help us after we get our running game cranked up."

"The only thing that happened to Alderman last week against ECU was that he got his pride hurt. He'll bounce back through. He's a fine young man who gives us an added dimension."

Last season Alderman hit 9-of-12 passes for 119 yards and, two touchdowns as the backup quarterback to Bower. Meanwhile Bower hit 75-of-145 passes for 905 yards but only completed two passes for TDs.

"Last year we ran the ball, but our staff hopes to open it up a little more and take advantage of Alderman's arm," declared Collins.

On the offense the Eagles have more experience on the line than last season. Heading up the line is All-American candidate tackle Eric "Big E" Smith 6-5, 278. On the opposite side could be Porter Mitchell 6-1, 252, Amos Fowler, 6-3, 245 or Stanley Sanders 6-4, 242.

Returning lettermen at guards are Steve Boyette 6-0, 250 and Eddie Kaplan 6-1, 237. And snapping will be Barry Cauldill a 6-4, 235 senior.

The only experienced wide receiver for the Golden Eagles is John Cannon.

On defense Coach Collins admits that he's got some untested talent. "We lost our best linebacker, Ronnie Cheatham and noseguard Randy Latta via graduation."

Returning for the Golden Eagles are defensive ends Bobby Smithhart a 6-4, 239 junior and Ben Hale a 6-0, 197 junior. Backups are Reggie Odom a 5-11, 211 junior and Bishop Knor 6-3, 237 junior.

Stanley Parker 6-4, 228 and Eddie Nunez 6-0, 243 are the starting guards with Alan McColough 6-2, 250 and Rand Basler 6-1, 246 the backups.

The only player returning in the secondary is Carl Allen.

"We have people that have the ability, but they don't have the experience and that just comes with playing time," declared the Eagle mentor.

TECH COACH JIMMY SHARPE
Dons Head Set, Lucky Sweater