Roscoe Coles
Pays Small Price

By JERRY VERNON
Sports Writer

Roscoe Coles almost decided against enrolling at Virginia Tech in 1974. He didn’t dislike the school. Another alternative simply looked more attractive when he completed his lustrous football and track career at Bayside High School in Virginia Beach.

"Out of high school I didn’t think much about going to college period," said the Gobblers’ top running back Monday night. "I thought about going into the service and making a career out of that. Then I thought about it and realized I could get four years of credit as an officer in college."

He blew into Blacksburg two years ago under the auspices of a football scholarship. He hit the Tech R.O.T.C. program quicker than he spun through any defensive lines.

"I like what the Army’s got to offer and I think I can add something to it," said the Tech squad’s only R.O.T.C. member. "I think it can be a benefit to me."

College for Coles, is more than a four year shot at pro football.

"I’m not depending on getting drafted," he explained, "but if I do that’s good. Right now I’m just having a good time and getting an education. I’ve gotten a couple of questionnaires, but that doesn’t mean anything. In fact, I got one today (Monday) from the Cincinnati Bengals."

For the moment Coles has no military obligation, but plans to sign an Army contract sometime next year if he is offered the opportunity. Football remains secondary to his education and serves as a means for paying college expenses.

"I’m getting a free education for a lot of bruises," explained the 5-9, 189 pound back. "But you can’t beat the price for that."

The "Little Man", as some coaches call Coles, knifed his way through defensive lines last season for 1,645 yards. He has already scored 18 touchdowns in his short career, one more than Phil Rogers tallied in his career, and Coles needs only one more 100-plus rushing performance to tie Rogers for this honor.

But this year, Coles’ junior season, the back has had his share of problems. In three games he’s only scored twice. His rushing total, 209, is a hunk off last year’s early performance. The problem has been and still is, going into this week’s encounter with William & Mary — injuries.

"Since the first game Roscoe has been bummended up with everything from an ankle injury, bruised thigh, slight knee sprain and a slight shoulder separation," said Nelson Stokely, Tech’s defensive backfield coach.

According to the coach, Coles’ injuries have hampered the back’s blocking more than his running.

"I think the injuries have hurt a little bit," said Coles. "When you go out there you’re worrying that you can’t go full speed. But it really doesn’t bother me because if I go out there and say, ‘I might as well do the best the I can.’"

The back’s problem, going into this week’s game, is a slightly separated right shoulder. It’s his blocking shoulder which forces him to switch his efforts to different techniques.

"I can use my head, but that’s not too good," laughed Coles. "Or I can body block and roll them."

The back, in his mild manner, shrugs aside his early season problems. He looks to Tech’s remaining nine games more than he considers the Hokies first three encounters.

TECH’S ROSCOE COLES
Tech’s "Burner" In Backfield

"I think we should have no problem winning the rest of our games," he said. "Then maybe a bowl."

Stokely has cut Coles a little slack in this week’s practice. After the back’s shoulder was injured in a scrimmage Saturday, the coach decided, in his words, "to try to watch him as closely as possible."

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