

## Knee Injury

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# Tech Loses Belcher

By DAVE SCARANGELLA  
Special Writer

In 1975, Gibson (Gippy) Belcher graduated from high school. Like most, he had certain goals he wanted to achieve over the next few years. These goals were somewhat different from most, and a lot more costly.

For Belcher's goal was to prove he could play major college football. An all-district, all-region player out of Colonial Heights, Belcher went unnoticed by most college scouts. Most said that at 5-9, 160 lbs., he was too small to play.

Belcher didn't believe this. Playing as a walk-on with the Virginia Tech Junior Varsity squad, he earned a scholarship his freshman year. This year he played well enough in practice to earn himself a starting job in the Varsity secondary when Henry Bradley was injured.

Thursday, Gippy Belcher's dream was temporarily interrupted on an operating table in Roanoke Memorial Hospital. A freak accident in practice had resulted in torn knee ligaments, putting him out of action for the rest of this season.

"It was kind of wet," remembered Belcher, "and we were running a one on one drill. Steve Kemp ran an out pattern,

and I planted for the interception. He slipped into me, and my knee just caved in."

Injuries are nothing new for Belcher. Last year he broke his back. But still his latest injury has to be some type of a letdown. "In a way it's a big disappointment," said Belcher, "but I'll get another chance."

Belcher lost his starting job right after the game against Texas A&M. Yet the Tech coaching staff feels Belcher will definitely be missed. "He's a big loss to us," said defensive coach Buddy Bennett. He was in a position to take it (the job) back this week."

Head Coach Jimmy Sharpe also agreed. "Gippy is a dedicated, gutsy young man that is not blessed with great size, but he's a winner. With him out that only leaves us with three cornerbacks."

If it's any consolation to Belcher, he might get this year of eligibility back. "We feel we'll get it back on a hardship case," said Sharpe. "We can't apply until the end of the season, but I'm confident about it."

For Belcher, he'll spend the next six weeks in a cast, and then the long road back through rehabilitation. Yet Belcher still feels he reached his goal. "I proved to myself that size doesn't mean anything," he said, "and I'll be back."