By Wendell Weisend

Virginia Tech suddenly has developed a "pain" in the kicking game! Greg Payne, that is, 5-10, 167, senior from Hampton.

Until his 70-yard td punt return Saturday against VMI, the biggest play of his varsity career has been a 44-yard pass interception return against Florida State in 1974.

But his speed and running ability weren't secrets. In the 1974 and 1975 spring intrasquad games, respectively, he had td punt returns of 74 and 80 yards.

He lettered as a defensive back in 1974 but was relegated to JV service in '75. (Tech in 1974 and 1975 had one of its better return specialists in sure-handed Billy Hardee.)

Payne was pressed into punt and kickoff return duties Saturday because Henry Bradley was out of action due to injury.

Payne's varsity career has been checkered. In 1976 spring drills, after two years with the defensive unit he was moved to running back.

After a week of fall practice he was switched to wide receiver.

He now constitutes a threat in Tech's six remaining games as a return specialist.

Another senior who made a big difference in last Saturday's outcome was another converted defensive back, Tom Cooper, who until last week had been at tight end. He returned to the Gobblers' depleted secondary and helped spark the Hokies in one of their most aggressive defensive performances.

Offensively, aside from a flawless, sustained (65 yards/15 plays) march that was what Coach Jimmy Sharpe and staff had been looking for, one of the biggest detonations in Tech's explosion was a 37-yard td run by sophomore running back Dennis Scott who demonstrated his blazing speed. It shouldn't be surprising to see him do it on more occasions in the future.

Getting it all together didn't arrive any too soon for the Hokies who this Saturday will be in their third straight "neighborhood brawl" against Virginia at Charlottesville.

The last clash between the Gobblers and the Cavaliers at Scott Stadium was one of the state's football classics, a 28-27 decision for the Cavs.