Tech's McCarter has seen it all

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BLACKSBURG — In less than two weeks, Virginia Tech defensive end Keith McCarter will have time to reflect.

"Face it," said the Colonial Heights senior. "since I've come here, the Tech program has grown by leaps and bounds."

Understand, McCarter isn't taking credit for Tech's turnaround from a loser into a winner.

What he's saying, though, is that Tech has gone from the depths to the heights in his four year tenure.

McCarter's career has only two games remaining—at Richmond on Saturday and a week from tomorrow night at Florida State. This is assuming that Tech doesn't receive a post season invitation. And this is likely to be the case.

"I've been through it all here," said McCarter, who was recruited by the ill-fated Charlie Coffey regime.

Coffey resigned following McCarter's freshman year. If he hadn't, the Tech senior might not have been here now to tell his story. He wouldn't be going home tomorrow for his final appearance in the Richmond area.

"I thought it would take a lot longer to be a winner than three years," said McCarter, recalling the woeful 2-9 record Coffey's final team posted.

"I was at the bottom of my emotions. There wasn't much enthusiasm to play the game. I didn't enjoy being out on the field."

With the arrival of Jimmy Sharpe as Tech's coach, McCarter has had a much easier time.

"Since Coach Sharpe came, it's been a different experience. The coaches are like our friends, not our enemies. We're in it together. They're out to help us," McCarter emphasized.

Maybe that's why McCarter can hide the disappointment if Tech doesn't make it to a bowl game. He points out that if the Hokies can come up with a pair of wins, he'll have played on a pair of teams that won 16 games in his final two years.

That might not sound like a big accomplishment, but never before have two Tech teams put together back-to-back seasons for 16 wins. The Hokies have had 15 wins in two years twice (1966-67) and (1921-22).


"We were hoping for something better. A 9-2 record would have been real good and then we would have had a chance for a bowl."

Of course winning the last two games could prove to be tough. The Hokies might be down with no apparent bowl bid in view after last week's 35-31 loss to Tulsa.

"The coaches were afraid we'd be down," said McCarter. "They gave us Monday off to get us up."

"But I don't think we're that kind of team to let it affect us. We lost to West Virginia last year and came back to win the last four."

"There was no down feeling in practice. The coaches said we played one of our best games and gave a good effort (against Tulsa). They weren't out to punish us."

McCarter says that he's heard Richmond is especially up to play against him this week.

"Maybe some of the guys there don't like me because I came to Tech," he said.

Whatever, it's doubtful that three years ago McCarter would be helping Tech attain its best back-to-back seasons in history or even be thinking of pro football.

Like the man says, he's gone from the depths to the heights in so short a time.

Keith McCarter
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