Houseright staying behind

By JACK BOGACZYK
Sports Writer

BLACKSBURG — Mitchell Barnes, Paul Adams, Tom Besseley, Rondal Davis, Moses Foster, Keith McCarter, Stuart Patterson.

They all started football careers at Virginia Tech in 1973, some of the quality remains of a Charley Coffey regime people on the sprawling campus here have tried to forget.

Saturday night in Tallahassee, Fla., they will play their last game in a Tech uniform as the Gobblers face Florida State. But while Bill Houseright came with that group to Blacksburg four years ago, he won't leave with them.

Houseright, the Gobblers' nose guard, was redshirited in 1974. But despite the fact that he has one year of eligibility remaining, some people thought Florida State would also be the college finale for the Gate City product.

Not so, says the oft-injured Houseright.

"I would have had to come back to graduate anyway," said Houseright, who hobbles around constantly with what has become a chronic left foot ailment. "But it isn't just that. I want to play some more football.

"I'm not satisfied with the way I've played this season. I've got a couple bad games. Sure, you can say it was because of the injuries, but I don't like to look at it this way."

In returning, Houseright will be part of the Gobblers' contingent that will out to prove itself after this year's club slipped from bowl game contention with consecutive losses to Tulsa and Richmond.

"We really can't afford to lose this game," said Houseright of Florida State. "This is an important time of the year as far as next year goes (recruiting, etc.)."

Houseright has had nothing but physical problems in his football career since schoolboy days. As a Gate City junior, he broke his ankle. The next season he "messed up" his knee. Now, it's his foot.

"It has something to do with the ligaments," said Houseright, who usually plays injured. "I've also broken my nose twice since I've been here at Tech. But the doctors have told me that there's no way I can hurt it (the foot) anymore than it's hurt now. So, I keep on playing. With rest during the summer, it should be all right next year."

Even though he was injured, Houseright made nine tackles in Tech's 16-0 loss at Richmond last week. That's two more than the other front four starters combined to make.

"It's been a disappointing season for everybody," said Houseright, his cheek puffed by a wad of chewing tobacco. "The disappointment started at Texas A&M. We really thought we had a chance to win that game.

"After that, we didn't think we'd lose any more. But the next week we had to struggle against Southern Mississippi. Then William and Mary beat us. But I think Texas A&M really was the team that busted the bubble.

"We should have beaten Tulsa. We whipped them everywhere but on the scoreboard. I guess maybe we were just too loose for Richmond."

But while Houseright talked about missed opportunities, he at least has another one. Some of his former 1973 freshman classmates aren't as fortunate.