Rick! *He's Not Too Small Anymore*

By JERRY VERNON
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Football recruiters considered Rick Razzano too short for the college gridiron two years ago.

His two home state schools, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pittsburgh told Razzano his 5-11 frame just wouldn't fit in with the intercollegiate circuit.

"I went to Purdue and Indiana and they didn't offer me a scholarship," recalled Razzano yesterday via the telephone. "You know I was getting pretty discouraged."

No one seemed to care about Razzano's All-America status as linebacker and fullback at New Castle High School in Pennsylvania. He was great on the prep field, they said, but he didn't have a shot in college - he was just too short.

Finally, a couple of schools took note of Razzano. The University of Cincinnati invited him to its Ohio campus. He wasn't too impressed with Cincinnati's program, but signed a scholarship anyway. After all, you can't get too picky when no one seems to care.

"Then (Jimmy) Sharpe came in and invited me here," remembered the grateful VPI & SU linebacker. "I liked the area, the coaches and the way I was treated. It was the first time I was in Virginia and I thought the country was pretty."

The Tech coaching staff was also impressed with "Razz," as his teamates call him. Ten days after Razzano arrived in the 1974 Hokie camp, he was called a starter.

"That was the year the 30 man rule (NCAA scholarship limitation) came up," said Razzano. "I guess they didn't want to take a chance on me. I'm just fortunate that Tech came in and I got a chance to come down here."

Since his freshman debut, the 225 pound linebacker has hit the field in 22 consecutive Tech matches. Last year he proved the Hokie coaching staff a little more insightful than those recruiters who rejected him - Razzano earned honorable mention All-American and was named to the second team All-South squad.

His size certainly has served as no hindrance and, as far as Razzano is concerned, as no advantage.

"I just think it doesn't matter whether you're 5-11 or 6-1. What's a couple of inches," he said. "I think these college recruiters, the pros are even worse, look too much at the paper. That's what makes you look good, but it doesn't mean anything."

What counts, according to the linebacker, is the old adage - "hard work." And it is with this in mind that the Hokies have inverted their plunging performances into winning efforts.

"It just didn't happen by saying we were going to have a good season," explained Razzano. "I think mostly it's been our attitude. When Sharpe came in we were 2-9 and then last year we were 8-3."

"Last year we thought we were going to get a bowl shot if we beat Wake Forest," recalled the distributive education major. "We beat 'em 40-10 and we didn't get it. That kind of let us down and so this year we're hoping for something bigger."

Razzano expects this Saturday's match-up against Wake Forest to come off a lot tougher than last season. The Deacons, according to him, think Tech ran the score up last year for the sake of embarrassment and in hopes of the bowl bid. But, in his words, "that's alright, 'cause we're ready.

GOBBLERS' RICK RAZZANO
Was Once Shunned Because Of Size

But according to a number of views the Techmen must look really good this year for a bowl shot because of their schedule. It's often considered slack.

"That's definitely not true," said Razzano. Our schedule isn't weak or anything. We play Texas A & M, West Virginia and Florida State. Last year we only lost to West Virginia 10-7 and they won the Peach bowl."

While team success weighs the heaviest on Razzano's mind, individual hopes for the future also protrude into the linebacker's thoughts. He knows he's got a shot at All-American and wouldn't snub a tryout with the pros.

"This year it (All-American) all depends on what the team does," espoused Razzano. "If I do the best I can for the next two seasons, I'll have a shot at going further in football or at least, I'm hoping."

Size. It has not hurt Tech's leading linebacker for the last two seasons. And it's an excellent wager his frame will not serve as a hindrance this year because, in his words, "you only get what you earn." And Razz, as a sophomore, earned a lot.