



Georgia Tech's junior back Robert Lavette sneaks by a defender. Lavette appears to be a strong candidate for ACC rushing honors.

Lavette to lead Jackets against tough schedule

By MICHAEL PERSINGER

Staff Writer

Georgia Tech finished the 1982 campaign 6-5, the Yellow Jackets first winning record since 1978. But that was accomplished against one of the mildest schedules Tech has had in years.

This season, the Jacket schedule is murderous, and that doesn't make the chances for a repeat of the 1982 performance very good.

Tech, while making progress, has still not reached the point it can compete with the nation's better teams. Five of the six teams the Yellow Jackets beat a year ago ended the season with losing records.

Georgia Tech coach Bill Curry, in his fourth year at the helm of the Yellow Jackets, said one of the problems with his program in recent years has been a lack of booster support. But, he said, all that is changing.

Last year, Tech built the \$7 million Edge Athletic Center, with all of the funds coming from Tech boosters.

The facility is evidence of growing recruiting competitiveness for the Yellow Jackets.

"When I came here, our practice field was a pasture," Curry said. "We had two sprinkler heads and a hose. I was desperately concerned with the conditions when I came here."

But Curry knew what he was getting into when came. Curry was an All-American at Tech in the early '60s and an assistant with the Yellow Jackets in 1966, so he knew of the conditions when he took the job.

But instead of accepting the conditions, Curry has done his part to change them. Tech has 40 Yellow Jacket clubs across the country now.

The increased support and the money that comes with it has put the Jackets back on the recruiting map.

"When we came here, we did a survey of the freshmen," Curry said. "Something like 92 percent said they came to Tech because they couldn't get a scholarship anywhere else. That was scary."

Now the Yellow Jackets can recruit not only with the ACC but also with such Southeastern

Conference powers as the University of Georgia. Tailback Robert Lavette is a prime example—he is a Georgia product swiped from the Bulldogs' grasp.

Another problem at Tech has been the curriculum. Georgia Tech is one of the finest engineering schools in the nation, and there is no such thing as a liberal arts major at the school. The freshmen are given a break on admissions, but after that, they take the same courses as other students right down the line.

Georgia Tech may not be ready to challenge for the national championship, but Tech's program is on the road to respectability.

Lavette, without question, is the key for Tech. He topped the 100-yard mark seven times last season, and the Yellow Jackets won six of those games. He ranked tenth in the nation in both rushing (280 carries, 1,208 yards, 109.8 yards per game) and all-purpose running (1,570 yards, 142.7 per game), and he was second in the nation in scoring (10.4 points per game). He is now one of the nation's top backs.

Junior Keith Glanton returns at fullback, but quarterback Jim Bob Taylor must be replaced. Stu Rogers and Ken Escoe are the leading candidates for Taylor's spot.

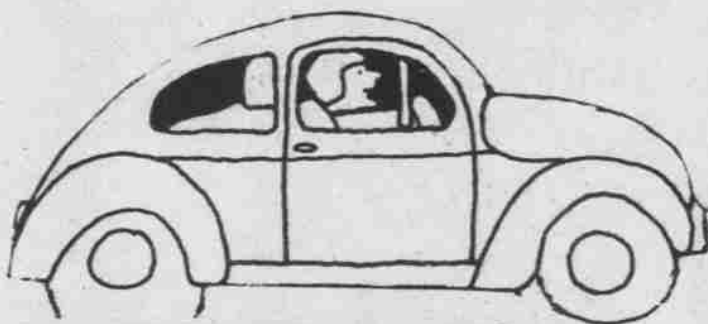
Center Dean Waters and guard Derek Gwinn are the only returning starters on the offensive line, and seniors Stan Sparks, Mark Morgan, Vince Garcia and Peter Blazek will be counted on to fill the holes.

The strength in the Tech defense will be the linebacking corps. Senior Rob Horton returns after a 100-tackle season in 1982. Robert Jaracz and Dante Jones both made more than 80 tackles last season.

Bobby Hodge and Donnie Chisholm will anchor the defensive line while Mike Travis and Daryl Wise anchor the secondary.

For the first time since joining the conference, Tech will be eligible for the league crown this season. The Jackets were 2-2 against league foes a year ago, and while Georgia Tech may not challenge for the conference crown this season, the Yellow Jackets are looking to be a team of the future.

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