Total Conference Athletics Return — at Last!

“1964 was a milestone year in the school’s sports history. Consistent with a campus-wide effort to elevate Tech from the depths of semi-provincialism to a position of national prestige, the men in the gray stucco architectural monstrosity on Third Street decided to leave the SEC, a tradition-rich but obsolete athletic conference. Doubts about the fate of minor sports were voiced, but Tech’s fans — eternally optimistic — seemed to approve wholeheartedly.” — the 1964 BLUEPRINT

THE HISTORY

On January 27, 1964, the Georgia Tech Athletic Association made what they considered a wise move for the time — Georgia Tech left the Southeastern Conference. Athletic Director Bobby Dodd disagreed with the Conference on scholarship rules, and the acrimonious dispute that arose between Tech and other members of the SEC finally resulted in the break. For the situation then prevailing, the recruiting problems Tech faced due to its scholarship limitations made leaving a viable option. Only later did the detrimental effects of that decision become apparent.

With the loss of guaranteed revenues from the SEC, Tech became extremely dependent on attendance figures to keep its athletic budget healthy. Yet, while Tech maintained the traditional rivalries with Georgia, Auburn and Tennessee, fans recognized that the games were essentially meaningless in terms of championships, and accordingly stopped visiting Grant Field on Saturday afternoons. The loss of traditional rival Kentucky proved devastating to the basketball program and emptied the Coliseum stands even more quickly. The competition for Atlanta’s entertainment dollar was only intensified by the arrival of professional sports franchises. Gradually, those in the “gray stucco architectural monstrosity” realized the devastating effect the decision to leave the SEC had on the athletic program. However, no formal request for reinstatement was ever made by Coach Dodd. Informal approaches by influential Tech alumni were made to several SEC directors, always causing a spate of rumors before SEC meetings, but the anger generated by Tech’s departure proved too great to overcome and all these efforts went for naught.

Enter new athletic director Doug Weaver in June 1976. Conference-oriented from the start, he realized the special circumstances which permitted Notre Dame and Penn State to thrive as independent schools. He also noted that conference membership assured a more stable budgeting base through the “share-the-wealth” program. Tech had not fared well in this regard. 1977 brought in no extra revenues, while 1978 proved a veritable bonanza as ABC, CBS and the Peach Bowl added $900,000 to the treasury. To moderate the “boom-and-bust” cycle, Weaver sought a conference affiliation to guarantee at least a basic athletic budget.

Soon after Weaver accepted the directorship, Tech became a charter member of the Metro Six Conference, a basketball-oriented athletic group; it became the Metro Seven with the addition of FSU in 1977. From the first, Tech indicated that should a football-oriented conference show interest, they would explore the option.

Such is the background to the overture Tech made to the SEC in early 1978 — Weaver formally requested that the SEC indicate whether it planned to expand and, if so, would Tech be considered as a possible member? The committee appointed to examine the request returned a verdict of “no” to expansion for various reasons, to which the Conference agreed. Weaver then met with representatives of the Atlantic Coast Conference and informed them that Tech would look favorably upon a membership bid, and one was duly extended and accepted. On April 3, 1978, Georgia Tech left the Metro Seven Conference and joined the ACC.

The parting, unfortunately, wasn’t amicable. While Larry Albus, commissioner of the Metro Seven, regretted losing the prestige Tech gave the Conference, he made no move to interfere. The athletic directors of the Metro were not so charitable. Tech had hoped to avoid another bitter scene, but the benefits offered by ACC membership had an allure too great for the Athletic Association to ignore. While 1964 represented the end of one era in Tech’s sports history, 1978 will be remembered for the new beginning it offered the “Ramblin’ Reck.”

ACC HISTORY

Georgia Tech is no stranger to the member schools of the ACC, having been affiliated with the old Southern Conference until the unwieldy logistics of its twenty-three members caused the formation of the SEC in December 1932. Growth of the conference again occurred until 1953, when the same difficulties with scheduling led the seven charter members of the ACC to withdraw to form their own conference. Virginia joined Clemson, North Carolina, North Carolina State, South Carolina, Duke, Maryland and Wake Forest to bring the ACC to eight members by the end of 1953. It stayed at that strength until 1971, when South Carolina decided to withdraw. So, in a sense, Tech has always had an affiliation with its new conference, which has now been formalized with its membership.

THE TRANSITION

The ACC and Tech offer each other a mutually beneficial relationship. Tech gains all the benefits of conference membership, while the ACC gains from its exposure in Atlanta’s large media market, from expanded facilities and from Tech’s reputation of athletic excellence.

As for Tech’s teams and their participation in conference sports, Sports Information Director Jim Schultz offered the opinion that the football program would be immediately competitive, though not eligible for a championship until 1982, due to the long lead times of football schedules. Two or three years would be the shortest estimate of the time the basketball program would need in order to catch up to the ACC powerhouses, although some surprises can be expected. The seasonal sports? Early indications were given by the track and golf teams as they participated in the Conference championships last April. An evaluation of the potential of these teams will be made after close observation to determine whether further financial or scholarship help will be needed to increase their competitiveness. Still, until the teams meet their new rivals, all is speculation.

THE SCHOOLS

The ACC now has a roster including Clemson, Maryland, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Virginia, Wake Forest and Duke as well as Georgia Tech. To introduce the new (and not-so-new) rivals of the Yellow Jackets, a profile of each follows.

CLEMSON: ACC football champions in 1978 and winners of the Gator Bowl, Clemson’s football program has made dramatic strides in recent years. A long rival of Tech, Tiger fans look forward to rejoining the fray. Their basketball program, while not as successful, is competitive with any school in the country.

MARYLAND: Home of “Lefty” Drisell and the “Amen Chorus”, the Terrapin basketball program constantly appears among the top-ranked schools in the nation. Maryland’s football team also played Texas in the Sun Bowl this year.
NORTH CAROLINA: When one thinks of ACC basketball, one R thinks of the Tarheels, the four-corners offense and Coach Dean Smith, who led the U.S. Olympic basketball squad to the gold medal in 1976. Carolina Blue is never far from the top of any ACC competition.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE: Perpetually scrapping for the conference top spot, the Wolfpack of late has seen solid performances from both its football and basketball squads.

VIRGINIA: Presently reevaluating its conference status in light of the high academic standards it enforces on its athletes, Virginia nevertheless has managed an impressive record in the conference. 1976 saw the Cavaliers take the ACC basketball crown. The football program, under former Tech coach Dick Bestwick, is gradually improving. Their main claim to fame seems to be the incredible halftime show put on by the Award-winning University of Virginia Fighting Cavaliers Indoor/Outdoor Precision? Marching Band and Chowder Society-Revue Unlimited, which earned a standing ovation from Tech students in 1976.

WAKE FOREST: The Demon Deacons fell one game short of the ACC basketball title last year when they lost to Duke in the finals. Deacon football hasn’t been so successful in past years but soon expects a resurgence. The golf team represents Wake Forest’s pride — the team has eleven ACC titles to their credit.

DUKE: The surprise ACC basketball champions last year, Duke is more remembered for its 25-24 victory in the waning seconds of Tech’s 1977 Homecoming game. The Blue Devils are a perennial thorn in the side of the Jackets.

THE OUTLOOK
While Tech opened its conference competition in April, some years will go by before the Jackets become fully competitive with their new rivals. The question of the moment: are Tech’s notoriously fickle fans willing to endure these early years until recruiting brings in the talent with which to reverse the declining fortunes Tech athletics have known since leaving the SEC? The ACC is no miraculous cure-all for the ills of the athletic program. It represents a long-term commitment by Tech — one that is not expected to pay off for some time. Yet, it represents the best move Tech has made to return to its former position of prominence in the national athletic conscience. The school of Heisman, Alexander and Dodd will again prove that the athletes it fosters earn the title “a hell of an Engineer.”
Metro Gets Mad as Jackets Gain ACC Membership

It was a transitional time for the major sports at Tech this year. With the recriminations of Metro Seven conference members behind them, Tech moved on to prepare for its full integration into the ACC.

The primary focus of Tech athletics, the football team, had their finest season in many years. The extraordinary season of star tailback and Heisman candidate Eddie Lee Ivery considerably enlivened those TV telecasts which showcased 'Reck talents for America. Tech also ended a six-year absence from post-season competition as they hosted Purdue in the Peach Bowl Classic. Seniors Don Bessillieu, named Best Defensive Player in the East-West Shrine Bowl and Senior Bowl, and Drew Hill, whose kick-return talents sparked the East team in the Japan Bowl, added more outstanding performances to complement Eddie Lee's.

The basketball team was placed tenth in the nation by the pre-season poll of Sports Illustrated magazine. Though problems dogged their efforts during the season, perseverance provided sparkling victories against Georgia, Memphis State and Cincinnati.

Jacket baseball opened with a flourish as the team streaked to an early 8-5 record. The promise wasn't fulfilled as slumps took their toll and Metro Conference politics spoiled the tournament. Still, the victory over SEC champion Auburn provided a satisfying end to the season.

Another year of athletics has come and gone, and next year's teams are preparing to renew the competition. The memories of this season, however, are sure to provide rich material for recollection by Tech alumni, present and future.
The Pagentry of Tech Football

Georgia Tech gives her people a special identity. When one leaves Tech, he is forever after known as a "Ramblin' Reck." Thus the unique pre-game ritual for every Tech home game. The Rats spill on the field to help the band form a "T", through which the 'Reck leads the team on the field with the strains of the world-famous "Ramblin' Reck" fight song in the air. This ceremony reminds Tech people of the common heritage and tradition that binds them together. Plus, it's damned inspiring.
The new year brought a new look to the 1978 Yellow Jacket football team. Head Coach Pepper Rodgers gave up his beloved Wishbone offense in favor of the more open I-formation. The ground game would be built on the rushing of Eddie Lee Ivery and Rodney Lee, while the new passing game would combine the skills of quarterback Ted Peeples and either wide receiver Drew Hill or tight end Donnie Sewell. Defensively, the Jackets would show opponents a 3-4 lineup controlled by free safety Don Bessillieu. Other potential standouts included defensive end Mackel Harris and noseguard Roy "Sugar Bear" Simmons. The many changes made it difficult to predict the upcoming season as the team was still making adjustments as the opening game approached. Everyone hoped the players would be ready before the trip to Duke.
A mystique surrounds Tech’s opening game. There’s something about starting the season that causes the team immense problems. There’s also something about Wallace Wade Stadium in Durham, N.C. The combination proved too much for the Jackets as they succumbed to the Blue Devils 28-10. Duke quarterback Stanley Driskell, replacing injured star Mike Dunn, provided a virtual repeat of last year’s Homecoming disaster — this year the Devils never trailed. In sweltering heat, the Jackets spent their time trying to escape the shadow of their own goalpost. The only excitement the offense generated was a 91-yard bomb by Peeples’ replacement, Gary Hardie, in the fourth quarter. Coach Rodgers said, “We always lose our opener, and we always lose to Duke in Durham, so I consider it as two losses compressed into one.”

California arrived in Grant Field to open the Jackets’ home season, but the situation didn’t improve. The Golden Bears literally grabbed two touchdowns from the hands of Tech defenders for an early fourteen-point lead. Tech’s offensive and defensive woes continued to plague their efforts, and yet they never conceded. They simply fell short at the end. The early margin proved too much to overcome in the Jackets’ 34-22 defeat. There was one new discovery: a new quarterback did move the team near the end. He was some Rat named Mike Kelley.
Tech Finds New Leader in Two Disappointing Losses
Smith Provides Margin of Victory Over Gamecocks

The continuing difficulties the Jackets experienced forced Rodgers to make some personnel changes. Defensive noseguard Roy Simmons and end Ben Utt moved to shore up the offensive line and open some holes for the backfield. Ivey Stokes took "Sugar Bear's" place at noseguard.

The roster moves proved their worth against Tulane. The game began as an instant replay of previous weeks as Tulane answered early Jacket scores with scores of their own. The Green Wave had the lead going into the final quarter, but two Tech TD's finally prevailed. The student section showed how much they appreciated Kelley's talents — Gary Hardie, leading Tech on its final scoring drive, was constantly assailed by shouts of "We want Kelley!" Still, no one argued with the 27-17 final score.

Citadel's Bulldogs served as Tech's next opponent, and the Rats earned their caps. A squad raced across the field and grabbed the Bulldog's tail, though jumping him afterward seemed a bit much. The game wasn't an impressive win. Citadel had been thrashed by Clemson a week before, but the Jacket offense never generated any sustained drives. All Tech scores resulted from big plays. Eddie Lee Ivery scored on a 51-yard run and a 71-yard punt return. Mike Kelley threw 51 yards to Rodney Lee for another. Sheldon Fox contributed an 11-yard run with a fumbled kickoff to close out Tech's 28-0 win.

For intense excitement and balanced teams, nothing could match the South Carolina game. The Gamecocks brought a great backfield tandem in George Rogers and Johnnie Wright, but Tech's defense played extremely tight and defused their threat. Carolina's defense was keeping Tech bottled up as well, so the score was still 0-0 heading into the final period. Carolina finally put three points on the board after a drive stalled. Tech's first comeback try ended when Johnny Smith missed a field goal. The defense wasn't letting Carolina away so cheaply, and gave the offense another chance. Mike Kelley moved the team into Smith's range with a bomb to Drew Hill, and Smith didn't waste his second opportunity. Inspired, the defense stopped Carolina in four plays. Eddie Lee, playing hurt yet en route to his second 100-yard-plus effort of the season, brought the jackets almost singlehandedly back into Smith's range. The field goal that resulted gave Tech an especially satisfying 6-3 victory. The Jackets were now rolling.
Helpless War Eagles Watch as Drew and Defense Roll

Miami certainly didn't appear as the awesome team the papers had portrayed, at least in the first half. Tech took a 24-point lead with an 80-yard drive ending in Rodney Lee's scamper for a touchdown, and Danny Mann fell on a fumbled punt in the end zone. During the second half, anguished Tech fans watched the Jackets desperately battle to preserve the victory. The Hurricanes, playing like a team possessed, racked up 19 points. Miami lost the ball game by an inch, as Miami fell one inch short of converting on a critical fourth down play. The Jackets ran out the clock to save a 24-19 decision.

The Jackets went on the road to War Eagle Country, with ABC-TV waiting to show the Southeast what promised to be a tough battle with Auburn's Tigers. Auburn got the ball first and proceeded to put on a frightening offensive show, driving at will down the field to score. The long afternoon that seemingly stretched ahead for Tech quickly shortened with a Mike Kelley pass to Drew Hill, who completely outfoxed the Auburn defender and scored. Eddie Lee followed with a 17-yard pass to Bucky Shamburger standing alone in the end zone. Mackel Harris and Al Richardson stifled further Turkey Buzzard moves while Kelley & Company put extra points on the board. Drew Hill joined Eddie Lee in the record books with a 97-yard kickoff return to open the second half with a Tech score. Auburn's last hopes dissolved in a Lawrence "Sweet and" Lowe interception. The police didn't try to stem the tide of Tech fans who surged on the field to celebrate the 24-10 victory.
Homecoming: Offense Rambles, Defense Wrecks

There was an eerie feeling during Homecoming — like you’d seen it all before. The previous year, Duke had destroyed Tech’s bowl hopes, ended the winning streak, and ruined the season with their last-minute heroics. Florida arrived hoping to spoil everything again, with ABC again telecasting regionally. The ‘Reck’s fortunes didn’t look too bright in the first half as Florida had ten points on the board against Tech’s three. The score could have been worse; the Jackets had grabbed a Florida fumble on their own goal line, and turnovers stymied other Florida drives. The third quarter opened with a Gator drive that stalled on the Tech three. Tech, knowing they needed the score, drove 97 yards for Eddie Lee’s tying plunge. Florida regained the lead with a field goal, but Kelley ran the offense to perfection and a final TD. Tech got the ball back and fell on it to ice a 17-13 Homecoming win.
Ivery Excels With Record-Breaking Performance

A week off and Tech was back on the road. Tech went out to Colorado Springs, Colorado to repay last year’s visit by the Air Force Falcons. The weather? It was awful! The 22° temperature with a wind chill factor falling below zero and blowing snow obscuring vision is fine for Minnesota’s Vikings but not Tech’s Jackets. With all that, it was still the most exciting game Tech had played until then. Don Patterson scored on an interception return to open the scoring, but Eddie Lee eclipsed everyone with his finest performance as a Jacket. Though nearly frozen and sick from breakfast, he blasted the Falcon defense on a beautiful 73-yard reverse-field touchdown run. Another 80-yard TD run pushed Tech even farther ahead. As fast as the Jackets pulled away, Zoomie quarterback Dave Ziebart closed back in with touchdown passes to his primary receiver, Carney. Eddie Lee and Ray Friday gave Tech three more TD’s to put the game away. Eddie Lee finished his day with 356 yards to break the NCAA single-game rushing yardage record. The 42-21 final score looked more impressive than the close game indicated.

From Colorado it was home again to play some bunch from South Bend, Indiana. No one had to remind Techmen of the unspeakable humiliation Notre Dame had heaped on the Jackets a year before. 69-14 isn’t a score, it’s an obscenity — especially when it seems deliberate. A pre-game pep rally gathered about 6000 people to cheer Heisman Trophy candidate Eddie Lee Ivery and his teammates. The game opened on a bad note. The Explorer Scouts raised the flag upside-down in the international signal of distress, and Vagas Ferguson took the game’s second snap 68 yards to the Tech six. The Irish only scored a field goal, but the tone of the afternoon was set. Quarterback Joe Montana led the Irish attack with Ferguson doing the ground work. Tech’s efforts, paced by Eddie Lee’s 102 yards, couldn’t match the opposition. Fan frustration manifested itself in fights, near-fights and in the hail of rotting fish and bottles that bombarded the Notre Dame bench toward the game’s close. It didn’t change the outcome — Notre Dame still won 38-21. It did draw some heavy flak from those who felt the entire Tech student body was reflected in the unsportsmanlike conduct of a few people. Despite the loss, Tech was still offered an invitation to host the Purdue Boilermakers in Atlanta’s Peach Bowl Classic.
Nation Watches as Jackets Come From Ahead to Lose
Seventy miles northeast of Atlanta lies the University of Georgia. Seventy miles separates Tech from her most bitter rival. For the Tech fans who traveled those seventy miles, the game they saw will live forever as the most exciting contest the rivalry has seen in recent years. There's just something about the ending . . .

Tech rooters had barely found seats before the Jackets took the lead on a quick TD drive. Coach Rodgers then brilliantly called a daring onside kick, executed perfectly by Don Bessillieu and recovered by the special teamers. Tech pushed in for another TD. Georgia muffed the next kickoff, and the Jackets capitalized with a field goal. Yet another fumble and Tech soon found themselves with 3rd-and-1 at the Georgia one. A mixup kept the handoff from reaching Rodney Lee, and Mike Kelley’s lunge fell just short of the goal. Tech settled for another field goal.

Anyone who had watched the Georgia team knew that a twenty-point deficit meant nothing to them. Kentucky’s and LSU’s “insurmountable” leads had succumbed to Bulldog magic. The comeback began as freshman quarterback Buck Belue replaced highly-touted Jeff Pyburn and moved the ‘Dogs to a score as the first half ended. It continued into the third quarter with a Willie McClendon plunge and a punt return to put Georgia ahead 21-20. Drew Hill wasted no time putting Tech back in front as he carried the ensuing kickoff 101 yards to set a new Tech return record, and with a two-point conversion the scoreboard read 28-21 Tech. Ecstatic fans chanted “Sting ‘em Jackets” — until Eddie Lee Ivery went down with a severely sprained ankle. As he hobbled to the bench, some of Tech’s emotional high went with him. Georgia scored on a desperation Belue pass and added two points to go in front 29-28.

Tech hadn’t come so far to lose by one lousy point. Mike Kelley and George Moore combined to move the Jackets toward Johnny Smith’s field goal range. The race against the clock may have hurried Kelley a bit — in any case, the Jacket drive went one pass too far. The last toss, the one Tech desperately needed, ended up in the arms of a Georgia defender. Hope died as the last seconds ticked away.

29-28.

ABC-TV loved it. Georgia fans loved it. The entire nation got to watch. For disappointed and bitter Tech fans, those seventy miles home seemed an eternity. Never had the “Good Word” had such meaning as it did that Saturday night, as Techmen hoarsely shouted, “TO HELL WITH GEORGIA!”
Outmanned Baby Jackets Play for Hospital Benefit

Georgia Tech played only one junior varsity football game this year, but in a special way it's more important than any of the varsity games. The traditional Thanksgiving Day game between the Baby Jackets and the Georgia Bullpups donates its proceeds to benefit the Scottish Rite Hospital for Crippled Children. In fact, the game is a major source of the hospital's revenue. The large crowds of recent years have gradually dwindled since the NFL began sponsoring Thanksgiving extravaganzas, and this year's sparse crowd was no exception. The Junior 'Becks, needing to advertise in the Technique to fill the lineman spots, were totally outclassed by the vastly more experienced Bullpups, losing 29-0. The lopsided score really didn't matter. Those kids who need the money can really ease the "agony of defeat."
To bowl-starved Jacket fans, the announcement that Tech would play Purdue in the Peach Bowl Classic seemed a dream come true. Six long years had passed since the 31-30 victory over Iowa State in the 1972 Liberty Bowl.

Murphy's Law seemed to strike Tech in the few weeks before Christmas Day. Eddie Lee Ivery's ankle stubbornly refused to heal, and he was reluctantly stricken from the starting lineup. Coach Rodgers, seeing the game as a reward for the team's excellent season, held only light workouts in contrast to the intense preparation of the Purdue team, who'd only seen two bowls in 90 years and were anxious to acquit themselves well. The Atlanta Falcons, Christmas Eve victors over the Philadelphia Eagles, left behind a less-than-ideal field. For those fans who came to the game, and those who turned in to CBS-TV's nationwide telecast, those were minor considerations — Tech was in a bowl!

The dream quickly became nightmare as disaster piled on disaster. Fans didn't find much to cheer as fumbles, interceptions and punt snaps that missed the punter victimized the Tech effort. The "Mighty I" was looking mighty inept. Pepper finally resorted to Gary Lanier and a revived Wishbone. It worked for a while — Tech managed a score.

The Purdue juggernaut, directed by quarterback sensation Mark Herrmann, was having a field day against the Jacket defense. Tech's mistakes showed up on the scoreboard as Purdue touchdowns. Purdue totally outplayed, outhit, outhustled and outclassed the Jackets. Their fifth-string team was the victim of two last-minute Tech scores, but then it's hard to maintain concentration with a 34-point lead.

Embarrassment, rout — whatever you chose to call it, it meant the same on the bottom line — Purdue 41, Georgia Tech 21. Putting it mildly, we got beat.
Thus endeth another season, the season of Eddie Lee Ivery. The senior tailback had shown last year that he would be an excellent back, gaining 900 yards to become Tech's all-time leading rusher. That served as only a prelude; this year he broke his own record, amassing 1562 yards. His 356 rushing yards against Air Force gave him the NCAA record for a single-game performance.

Nagging injuries hampered Eddie Lee in his early games, but in Durham he saw his first hundred-yard day, to be followed by similar efforts against Auburn, Florida, Air Force, Notre Dame and, before an ankle injury, Georgia.

His teammates responded to his leadership by naming him permanent team captain, a rare honor. This made him the football team's representative on the Athletic Board, a position he has admirably and effectively fulfilled. On the field, Eddie Lee was a constant inspiration to his teammates, and his team pride and spirit helped carry through the early losses into the Peach Bowl Classic against Purdue.

Eddie Lee's honors include Sports Illustrated Offensive Player of the Week for his brilliant performance against Air Force, Chevrolet Offensive Player of the Game against Georgia and Florida, eighth place in balloting for the Heisman Trophy (Techmen only grudgingly accept the fact that Oklahoma's Billy Sims won), AP and UPI All-American and very likely many more.

Professional football surely offers Eddie a bright opportunity, one Tech hopes he will accept. His departure will leave a gaping void in Tech's backfield and an almost impossible job to the next tailback in Tech's I-formation.
Metro Drops Games With Engineers

Georgia Tech's new ACC ties portended great things for the future of Ramblin' Reck basketball, but the immediate impact was complete disruption of the 1978 basketball schedule. The Metro Seven Conference members, in a fit of pique, canceled their games with Tech and left behind gaping voids in the schedule. Thus, Head Coach Dwane Morrison was forced to go searching for other opponents.

The Jackets received some special attention as their opener approached. Sports Illustrated's preseason poll placed the Jackets at tenth in the nation. Their previous highpoint of late had been 18th in the UPI poll just before the Metro Seven tourney the previous year.

Tech's season opened on the road as the Jackets visited South Orange, New Jersey. It wasn't an auspicious debut; Seton Hall nipped the Jackets 78-73.

The Jackets came home to the friendlier confines of Alexander Memorial Coliseum. There they proceeded to methodically dismantle their next four opponents. Baptist College suffered a 111-54 shellacking, followed by a 75-51 rout of rival Georgia. Biscayne College and Tennessee Tech didn't fare much better; the Bobcats dopped a 70-49 game, while the Golden Eagles suffered through a 108-63 rout. It seemed the Jackets were finally earning that number ten ranking.

At least, it seemed that way until Tech went back on the road. East Tennessee State humbled the Jackets 86-76. Even more galling was a 60-57 loss to Auburn's Tigers. Lackluster play was all that Tech produced in those games. Struggling to regain their past form, Christmas holidays found the team in Minneapolis, Minnesota for the Pillsbury Holiday Classic. In their best effort away from home, the Jackets took on Brigham Young and edged them 83-81, but the road curse returned as Minnesota squeaked past the Engineers, 57-56.
Jackets Prove Mediocre During Midseason Slump

The new year began as the old had ended — losing on the road. DePaul University welcomed the Jackets to Chicago, then sent them packing 77-71. Jacket field goal shooting was abysmally poor, as only 43% of their attempts scored.

The Jackets took out their frustrations on Newberry’s Indians with a 90-59 blitz. Indian opposition couldn’t overcome the play of the Jackets. A mediocre win over Western Carolina and a costly victory against Troy State followed. Starting center Rob Noyes found himself permanently benched after suffering an injury.

The Tech team everyone had been waiting to see finally asserted itself at Memphis State University. In a scintillating, double-overtime battle, the Jackets pulled out a victory. Tico Brown stepped forward to ice the game with eight straight points in the second overtime period. The winning streak extended to five games with the victory over Morris Harvey in Tech’s home Dome.

FSU brought Tech back to earth in Tallahassee. A seesaw struggle, led by Tech’s Drummer and FSU’s Murray Brown, swung the lead between Seminole and Engineer throughout the first half. Lack of bench support proved Tech’s undoing. Only the hot hand of Brook Steppe kept the Jackets close in the second half, as FSU pulled away to a 79-73 victory.

East Carolina caught Tech flat and pulled away to an early lead — in fact, Tech didn’t even score until five minutes had gone by. From there it was all catch-up, but the effort couldn’t overcome the lead. Tech lost, 66-64.

Then Cincinnati’s Bearcats showed up at the Coliseum. In a game reminiscent of Tech’s glory days, the Jacket cagers played Morrison’s team game and destroyed the ‘Cats 82-73. Everyone contributed to the victory, with top honors going to Lenny Horton for rebounds, Sammy Drummer for points and Steve Neal for all-around defense. Considering Cincinnati’s Metro Seven membership, it was a most satisfying revenge.
Seminoles Lose to Inspired Tech Team
Jackets Finish Campaign With a Four-Game Flourish

With two-thirds of the season gone, Tech was sporting an 11-7 record. Western Carolina made it 12-7 as they lost their second match to the Jackets 100-75. Cincinnati handed Tech its eighth loss as they revenged their earlier defeat with a 55-51 score.

Metro Seven foe Florida State was next on the Jacket "hit list," and Tech notched another victory. In a foul-plagued contest, Tech sent the Seminoles home on the short end of a 75-72 score.

The Jackets visited Georgia for a rematch, but the Bulldogs prevailed 56-55. Tech watched in frustration as the last foul shot bounced away with no time left on the clock — a true "matter of inches."

East Carolina hoped to find Tech in another slump, but the Jackets averted for their errant performance in the first game by pumping in 32 of 47 shots for a record .681 percentage and an 82-68 victory. Tech’s Big Two, Sammy Drummer and Tico Brown, led the way with 30 points and a 12-of-13 field goal effort, respectively.

The game with the Cougars of the College of Charleston provided a touch of nostalgia. Since the Secret Service had sealed off the Coliseum in preparation for President Carter’s visit, the teams found themselves in the Old Gym. Still, it was Tech’s home court, and the Cougars fought valiantly but lost 61-43.

The rumor mill was at work, with news that a 17-9 Tech team could reasonably expect an invitation to the NIT. The Jackets did their part — a convincing 79-63 destruction of Memphis State, and an 83-61 win over Campbell College put Tech in contention. While NIT is an abbreviation for "National Invitational Tournament," for the Jackets, it turned out to be "Never Invite Tech."

A final record of 17-9 is impressive, but considering the mediocre caliber of most of the opposing teams, it can also be seen as somewhat disappointing. Tech truly played to the level of its opponent — good teams saw outstanding Tech play, while worse teams only elicited bad performances. Next year’s team will sorely miss scoring leader Sammy Drummer, defensive specialist Billy Smith and Tico Brown, whose 1308 points put him fifth on Tech’s all-time scoring list. With ACC play beginning next season, Sports Illustrated will find it difficult to rate Tech tenth again.
Jackets Open With Easy Triumphs

Trying to open a baseball season during finals week was bad enough, but with Mother Nature drowning Rose Bowl Field, it became a more difficult proposition. When they did manage to play, the Jackets opened at a torrid pace, jumping out to an 8-4 record with routs of teams such as Hope College (24-0), Olivet (13-0) and Fairfield (17-0), while absorbing losses from powerful Clemson and an extra-inning defeat by Coastal Carolina.

Statistics reflected this early season pace; Tech led the nation in run production behind the bat of national RBI leader Gary Hardie and his .482 batting average.

Tech didn't lead the nation long after a rematch win over Clemson: Troy State and Miami bombed the Jackets and sent the pitchers' ERA figures to astronomical levels. Tech rebounded with a defeat of small-college power West Georgia, but slumped again in a sloppy 17-8 loss to archrival Georgia. Mercer followed with an 8-5 victory to drop the Jackets to .500 for twenty games. A trip to Columbia saw the Jackets drop a doubleheader to the Gamecocks. The pitchers were finally pulling out of their mid-season doldrums, but the hitters weren't helping by putting runs across the plate.
Tech prepared for the Metro Seven tournament by edging Mercer of Macon 5-4 in 11 innings, behind "a hell of a game" from pitcher David Middour. That provided a much-needed lift. In retaliation for Tech's ACC affiliation, the Conference seeded Tech seventh, despite their fifth-place record. FSU ended the tourney quickly for the Jackets, but they beat St. Louis and Cincinnati in the consolation playoffs.

The Jackets came home to end the season with a surprise win over SEC champs Auburn and a "frustrating" loss to Georgia.

Coach Jim Luck summarized the 14-15 season, saying "We played well. Had a few bad games and good games. The pitching was up and down, although they pitched better than expected. One thing that really hurt us was that we hit a batting slump for about two weeks before the Metro tournament. Then we picked up at the Metro, won two games there, beat the War Eagles . . . I feel pleased."

Next year the Jackets’ efforts will be in "lame-duck" (to use Coach Luck’s term) competition, since the ACC is reorganizing the conference tournament and Conference rules won’t allow Tech to sign scheduling contracts until the conference schedules are ready. With some pitching to replace the graduates, next year could be a good one for Tech.

Team Surprises SEC Champ Auburn at Close of Season
This year's squad continued that never-ending task of maintaining the fever pitch of excitement everywhere from Grant Field to the Air Force Academy. Their repertoire of frenzied poetry encompasses everything from the bland standard cheer to Tech's own delightfully off-color "Shove it!!" and risque "Differentials," designed to appeal to the scientific impulses of the student section. The present Sideline Strutters were the winners of the open tryouts held during spring quarter. After their sessions at cheerleader camp, they returned to assume their spots as representatives for Tech's athletic program. As winter quarter ended, another group began the process anew in the continuing quest for improvement.