West Point's Duke Thorpe Sounds Warning To Veteran VPI Cagers

By LYNN BURKE
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SALEM — Duke Thorpe articulately spelled out a warning to any complacent members of Virginia Tech's defending National Invitational Tournament basketball champions.

"I'm going up there with a super attitude. If somebody doesn't hustle, I'm going to take starting job away from them. I want to start as a freshman."

That may sound like a rather brash boast, but the slender 6-foot-5 graduate of West Point High may have the credentials to back up his statement. Although, he probably realizes it will take some work.

The big question surrounding the Virginia High School League's all-star basketball game Tuesday night was simply: "Can Duke Thorpe stop Calvin Crews?"

When it was over, the prevailing sentiment was: "Calvin Crews couldn't stop Duke Thorpe."

Crews is the 6-foot-11 giant from Halifax County, whose size held one of the keys for the West.

Thorpe, despite fouling out with 3:50 to go, played brilliantly at times and drew the praise of many coaches attending.

He sank six of 10 field goal attempts and three of five free throws for 15 points, third high on the East behind John Marshall's Leon Jones and Kecoughtan's Mike Has. Christened Charles, but nicknamed Duke, Thorpe was king of the backboards for the East, hauling down a record 14 rebound in an 88-86 loss to the West.

He bested last year's mark of 11 by Ferguson's Andra Brown.

One of the 4,481 spectators was Virginia Tech Basketball Coach Don DeVoe.

"If he hadn't gotten into foul trouble, he would have dominated the game, sure as the devil," the Gobbler mentor commented.

"He's got things to learn like shooting from the outside, but I'm real pleased with him. He's got great hands, tremendous reflexes and a good head."

"Also, he can really jump. He showed he can rip the ball off the boards with the 6-11 boys."

"One of the East assistant coaching was Norm Dinwiddie, who directed West Point to the Group A State championship this past year. "There's no way Crews could stop him. Duke had two bad fouls, but they came on hustle, so what can you say?" Dinwiddie said.

Thorpe collected three fouls in the first half, causing East Head Coach Carl Peal of Petersburg to replace him, but the Duke showed 'em how it's done in the third quarter, getting nine points in the first six minutes and dominating the backboards.

"I didn't change the way I played," the Gobbler recruit said. "I just wanted to make up for the first half."

During his spurt, the East built a 45-37 halftime lead into a 65-45 bulge, but couldn't hold it.

Thorpe picked up his fourth foul with 9:11 to play in the game, came out and went back in with five minutes to play and his team only leading 80-74.

Crews finished with seven points and had only four rebounds. After Thorpe's nine-point burst in the third period, Crews left the game and didn't return.

CLINIC CHATTER — Director Eddie Joyce reports "just over 1,000 coaches registered" as of Wednesday morning...

The happiest basketball player might be Jeff Fuhrmann of Fairfax Thomas Jefferson. He's allergic to dust on a basketball court, of all things, and had to take two shots a week for the past eight years. Before the all-star game, his doctor advised him not to take the shot and he found he didn't need it. He's headed for Old Dominion.