Tech Opens Basketball

BLACKSBURG, - An injury to guard Charlie Thomas temporarily has interrupted smooth development of Virginia Tech basketball, but Gobbler prospects are taking shape with an all-senior lineup.

Thomas sustained a hairline fracture in his lower leg during scrimmage last Saturday. How long he’ll be out is a moot question, but if he returns in time for the season opener on Dec. 1, Tech’s starting lineup will comprise all seniors.

However, Coach Don DeVoe feels that he has a second five of almost equal ability, and they are pushing hard.

“I’m pleased with our playable depth,” DeVoe says. “I have some reservations about our defensive consistency, and I’m also concerned about our offensive power inside. But overall we’re making progress.”

The Gobblers biggest asset again appears to be quickness. Bobby Stevens, 5-10 “quarterback” and hero of Tech’s N.I.T. championship last March, is playing better than ever. And teamed with Thomas it looks like a blue ribbon backcourt.

Calvin Wade, 6-5, sixth man last season, has joined 6-4 Ed Frazier at forward, and 6-6½ captain Craig Lieder has taken over the pivot.

“We always considered Calvin a starter,” DeVoe notes. “Frazier is 15 pounds heavier than at this time last year, but he needed the weight, and he is sharper than ever.

“But Lieder is the sleeper. In last Saturday’s scrimmage he had 34 points and 12 rebounds. He definitely has improved, and he handles the inside game well because he can use either hand going to the basket.”

Who will replace Thomas? Perhaps 6-5 sophomore transfer Dennis Shrewsburg who has been coming on really strong.

“Dennis has been our first substitute for the last week. He still has a long way to go on defense, but he does a number of things very well. And when he’s hot he’s a great scorer.”

Tech’s momentary second five holds a big key not only to the Gobblers’ 1973-74 season but also to the future.

Sophomores Kyle McKee, 6-8, Mike Collins, 6-7, and Dave Sensibaugh, 6-0, comprise the main core of the second unit. Duke Thorpe, a strong 6-6 freshman, adds good dimension to the frontline, and sophomore Mark Cartwright, 6-4 transfer, and 5-11 freshman Denny Fugate contribute strong fiber to the backcourt.

And DeVoe still lists as travel squad candidates Tim Harvey, steady 6-0 senior, Geoff Wiggins, 6-6 junior who battled his way to a traveling berth late last season, and 6-4 freshman Phil Thieneman.

The Gobblers will open at home on Dec 1 against VMI and then have a week to get ready for the first vial road trip to Auburn, Dec. 8, and Alabama, Dec. 10.