Bright VPI Cage Picture Confronts Injury Scene

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Most collegiate basketball coaches would like to have a team with four starters returning from a championship team, a strong bench of big rebounders, sharpshooters galore, and probably the best-looking cheerleaders in the game.

Despite these assets, Virginia Tech Coach Don DeVoe is worried about the season, and he has sufficiently good reasons.

For the first time in his career at Virginia Tech, DeVoe has to face injuries. His ace guard Charlie Thomas sustained a hairline fracture in his tibia during one of the team's sectional games last week and is out of the season, but we don't know when he'll be ready. DeVoe calls Thomas "a true team man."" We have to have a winning record at the end of December if we're going to be successful.

With Thomas in the lineup, the Gobblers have won 63 per cent of the 1972 National Invitational Tournament champs on the floor. Joining Thomas at guard will be scoofer Bobby Stevens, who filled the slot when the "sixth man" last season, and second-year Gobbler David Reynolds, a 6-0, 175-pound point man.

At forward will be Ed Frazier, the "quiet" unsung player who is in the starting lineup for the third straight year. At the other forward will be 6-foot-5 Calvin Wade. Wade was the "sixth man" last season, but he brings a spark and oomph to the bench to ignite Gobbler raids and stop the "other guys" when the opposition gets hot.

Craig Lieder will move from forward to center. Lieder is a strange story. He made double figures only once in the Gobblers' first six games last year when the high being 11. In his home town, Norfolk, Lieder got to sizzling, and scored 22 points as the Gobblers edged Old Dominion, 81-80.

He went over 20 eight times in the regular season, then had 81 in the four games in the NIT. "Lieder has to supply the leadership for us as captain." DeVoe declares. He added that Frazier is "15 pounds heavier, and much stronger. This should help."

If Thomas doesn't start, 6-5 transfer Dennis Shrewsberry will have the ball. Shrewsberry came to Virginia Tech after entering Appalachian State.

Shrewsberry has been leading the second unit. He and the front line of Kyle McKee 6-8, Mike Collins 6-7, and Duke Thorpe 6-6, give the Gobblers great rebounding depth.

Freshman Denny Faghetta, transfer Mark Cartwright, senior Geoff Wiggins all are battling to make the traveling squad.

Last year the Gobblers scored an average of 85.5 points, while the opposition had 77.9. "We'll be able to score better this year. If our defense can do the job, we'll be okay," DeVoe stresses defense. His players dive and scramble and hawk the ball, winning bigger, better teams. This year the Gobblers have the role of underdog. People won't be saying "Virginia shat" when the Gobblers come to town.

"We're going to be the team to beat, both at home and on the road. I hope we can win enough games to go to a national tournament again."

DeVoe added that the month of December is "critical."