Gobblers Finally Play Gators on Home Court

Turn-about is fair play so Virginia Tech, get out a big helping of home cooking to dish out tonight.

The Gobblers will be home to play Florida tonight and it will be the first time Tech has gotten its hands on the Gators in Blacksburg. Last year Florida, which had a weak team in the weak South-eastern Conference, beat the Gobblers, 92-73, in Alligator Alley.

But Florida lost just three games at home last year and didn’t win but two on the road. Florida has beaten Tech in three out of four meetings but has never played the Gobblers in Blacksburg.

Even UCLA would have its troubles beating the Hokies in the Tech Coliseum. Since the coliseum was opened, Tech has a home record of 112-16. Coach Don Devoe has a home record of 22-1 and that one loss was by one point on a shot at the buzzer. Tech just doesn’t like to lose at home.

"Playing at home is a tremendous advantage, but I can’t really tell you why,” says Devoe. “I can’t put my finger on how many points it’s worth, but it helps.”

“You can’t call Tech Coliseum a pit. The spectators are not right on top of you. The people are not right on the court.”

Some schools still play in old gymnasiums like at Florida State, Duke where spectators sit right along the court. Visiting teams have a decided disadvantage in pits.

“I think the big advantage is regularity in meals, rest and practice,” Devoe points out. “When you play at home, you stick to your regular routine. Also you’re shooting at a basket that has a familiar background.

"The home fans always help, too. It helps get the players up," claims the Tech coach.

And Devoe might have trouble getting his Gobblers up. Tech has lost three on the road and won both home games. Florida has won three at home and lost its only road game.

Another local game will have two teams that are both on the road. Virginia State College of Etrick and Virginia Union of Richmond will be playing in the Roanoke Civic Center in the Opportunities.

Industrialization Center Basketball Classic. Union has gotten off to a slow start this year but State is 5-1 and the team to beat in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

The OIC classic will open with a 6:30 high school game between unbeaten Roanoke Catholic and William Byrd.

The only other regular teams playing will be William and Mary at Fairfield and Furman at Niagara. Maryland will be in the second round of the Cable Car Classic in San Francisco and Wake Forest is in the second round of the Suncoke Classic in St. Petersburg, Fla.