Thomas Will Cross Pro Bridge When Comes To It

By DONNIE WALLS
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In most basketball games, it is a tremendous offensive effort which is the deciding factor.

Or the underlying factor between victory and defeat could be a dominant center controlling the glass to the extent that the opponents get only one shot; they'd better make it count the first time for it's the only chance they get. But it is very seldom when a steal is the deciding factor. Maybe intercepting an in-bounds pass, but never a plain old theft.

That is, in most cases.

Virginia Tech's Charlie Thomas has been given the nickname of "Mr. D," not only by his teammates, but also by anyone who is one of the Hokie faithful.

He showed why he is deserving of that title Wednesdays night when, late in the game and Tech up by only three points, Thomas stripped the ball from the Mountaineers and drove down the court and laid it in. Coach Don DeVoe said that this was one of two clutch plays that he made.

"This was my type of game," the 6-3 senior guard from Harrisonburg said.

"They were overplaying the wings, thus leaving me open. Craig (Leider) was supposed to take the shot (when Tech was one point down) but they were guarding him pretty closely. I had complete confidence in the shot I took. I have more confidence in my overall shooting ability than I have had in the last year. I have worked hard on it and it has paid off."

"I asked Thomas what it took to be able to steal the ball as often as he does without fouling the man. He replied "You have to have a great pair of eyes to make a steal. You have to be able to see the ball and the player at the same time. Then, when the ball is between his hand and the floor, you make your move. If you are quick enough, you will get to the ball in time."

"Does he want to make it in the pros?"

"I'm going to do my best to make it in the pros; at least give it an effort. I've talked to a couple of teams but there is nothing definite at this time."

"Right now I'm worried about Tech basketball; I'll cross that bridge when I get to it."

And, for a fine young man with the name of Mr. D pinned on him, he should cross that bridge in style.

Virginia Tech's Charlie Thomas (24) is a good pro prospect mostly because of his defensive capabilities. Thomas is great at overpower on defense, which the pro scouts love. See story above about Thomas. He'll be in action Saturday night when Tech (7-6) hosts Oral Roberts (14-3).