Wake coach, 2 Hokies meet

Ferrum's 'alumni' at Tech

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It's going to be a strange night for Wake Forest assistant coach Bobby Watson and Virginia Tech guards Bobby Stevens and Charlie Thomas.

Just two years ago Stevens and Thomas were playing for Watson at Ferrum College when the Panthers finished second in the national junior college tournament.

There were a lot of people after Thomas and Stevens, but Tech landed the pair and both have been big guns for the Hokies ever since.

Last year Carl Tacy, another former Ferrum coach, went after Watson and asked him to come to Wake. So that's how Watson will be on the opposite side from his two former stars when the Deacons invade Virginia Tech tonight at 8.

The Tech-Wake game heads a light area college schedule. Virginia was to have played at North Carolina State this afternoon.

Tonight underdog VMI will be a big underdog in another game. The Keydets travel to Dayton for a non-conference game.

Roanoke College isn't in action tonight. The Maroons won't play again until George Mason visits Wednesday.

There have been a lot of changes in Thomas and Stevens, according to Watson, since they played for Ferrum.

"Charlie isn't as good as he was and Bobby's better," said Watson. It is a shocking statement, especially considering that Thomas is Tech's second-leading scorer.

"Charlie was a 48 per cent shooter at Ferrum. Against William and Mary, he missed an open shot. He never would have done that," said Watson as he scouted Tech Thursday night.

"He hasn't been shooting in game conditions enough," Watson explained. "Last year he became known as Tech's defensive ace and didn't get to shoot as much."

As for Stevens, Watson says he's improved in hitting the open man. "He always was a streak shooter," the Wake assistant added in talking about another trait that has marked Stevens' two years at Tech. "He's still doing that.

"It's going to feel real strange being on opposite sides. I just hope they don't get hot."

Oddly, Thomas and Stevens agree with Watson's assessment. Thomas says his shooting is off from two years ago.

"I don't shoot enough here," he complained. "This offense isn't one for a guard. It's for the forward. At Ferrum it was a guard offense."

Watson says Thomas has everything to be a pro prospect, except the good shooting.

"I think," said Thomas, "that my shooting will hurt my pro chances. I guess I can learn to shoot again."

Stevens agreed with Thomas about the difference in Tech's and Ferrum's offenses. "Here we play a big man's game. This is how they play in the big leagues," Stevens said. "I try to do what I do best and what I do best is pass."

Thomas says he feels no emotion for the game even though his old coach is on the other bench. Stevens is just the opposite.

"It's like a personal battle," said Stevens. "I really want to show what the man (Watson) has taught me. He's shown me so much that I want to try to tell him in a way I appreciate what he's done."

The Tech-Wake game is a sellout and the Hokies have a three-game win streak going. Tech hopes 6'6 forward Craig Lieder, the team's leading scorer, has recovered sufficiently from a rib injury suffered against William and Mary.