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Sports Editor

Devoe faces big task

BLACKSBURG—It's times like these that are the proving grounds for a young coach. It's a time when a young coach earns his money, but more important, it's a time when he proves his ability to do the job or decides to take up some other occupation.

Coach Dan Devoe is scratching his head over the 6-5 loss to Virginia Tech last Saturday. He was hoping for just a little bit of luck, but it was the first time he admitted he doesn't have all the answers. He knew there was something wrong that must be corrected if the Hokies are to escape with a winning record for a respectable team.

Tech stands 18-18 after suffering a 64-58 loss here Saturday night to defeat Wake Forest. The first half was a poor one, showing the lack of basketball as the Techmen have played all season. At the same time it probably was as good as the Deacons have played.

Devoe certainly isn't lacking in criticism as to what is wrong. "Virginia Tech," he said, "is a quick and talented enough team from last season's NIT championship team that enjoyed an outstanding 20-20 over-all record.

He knows there is no big single fault. It is an accumulation of errors. Probably the weakest point has been the Tech shooting—which is just 40 per cent for the season. The team hit about 48 per cent last season.

Another Slammer

The Gobbler's have been beaten twice at home this season and have managed only one win on an enemy court—a 78-74 victory over the Penn Quakers.

Now they face a testing final month of competition. They entertain pennant contender Toledo Wednesday and then play two of the seven remaining games on the road.

This will be a time when both Devoe and his players must work to win another game of fire that made the rest of the team confident and aggressive.

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No combined effort

Devoe has spent much of the season shuffling his front line trying to find a winning combination. Tech certainly lacks a big man but it did last season, also. Allan Brown was quick and talented enough inside to cause trouble. But more importantly, Bratov supplied the necessary added gunpowder that made the rest of the team confident and aggressive.

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Such was the case against Wake when the Deacons threw up a tight zone and the Techmen stood disjointed and let the visitors control the tempo.

"We were not doing anything up from the outside," Devoe said. "You have to get inside, too. Sometimes you try to get inside but it just doesn't happen. Our front line wasn't moving into position. Then our guards were not moving fast enough to get it inside. We were a little bit too relaxed.

Things in the past haven't been too rough for Devoe. His initial two seasons as the head coach were outstanding successes, but he is under great pressure to return to that level of success.

Now he must show his true ability. He has two major tasks—renew the confidence and determination in his players and go about the job of salvaging five or six wins in the final drive.

A big test is sure, once the season is over, Devoe will have a much more valid evaluation of his own coaching ability.