Illini Want Veteran, Says Gobblers’ DeVoe

By DON ARCHER
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Don DeVoe is packing bags, but the luggage will only go along with him when Virginia Tech travels to Charlottesville and Fort Meyer this week. None of the bags will be ticketed for the University of Illinois.

“I really don’t think I’m a strong candidate,” says DeVoe. “They’ve contacted me and I sent them some credentials, but I don’t believe I’m in it.”

DeVoe, the youthful coach who guided Virginia Tech to the National Invitation Tournament championship last March, has been mentioned frequently in connection with the Illinois opening, created last week when Mary Schmidt resigned under pressure.

“I think Illinois is looking for a more established, more experienced coach,” he adds. “I think they’d like to have someone with more years of coaching than I have, someone who’s been around a while.”

DeVoe’s connection with the Big Ten stems from his playing days and experience as a graduate assistant under Fred Taylor at Ohio State. He considers the Illinois post a tremendous opportunity and says he would take the position if offered.

“There are four places in the Big Ten which would be good situations. Illinois is one of them,” he explains. “The others are Ohio State, Indiana and Purdue.”

DeVoe figures three coaches already mentioned as candidates for the Illini job are the leading contenders. “I think they’ll pick from Jack Hartman of Kansas State, Johnny Orr of Michigan or Gene Bartow of Memphis State,” the Virginia Tech head coach says.

“Sure, I’d be interested if they made me some kind of offer. I don’t think I could turn down that kind of opportunity.”

DeVoe’s name also has been mentioned as a possible successor to Taylor at Ohio State. Reportedly, Taylor is under fire with the Buckeyes currently last in the Big Ten and 6-15 overall.

Meanwhile, DeVoe’s plans include just two more games. “To assure ourselves of a winning season, we have to beat either Virginia or George Washington on the road,” he says. So far, Illinois doesn’t figure in his plans.