Tech Signs Fifth Recruit, Seeks Big Man

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BLACKSBURG — After months of hard work, the score is five down and one to go in Virginia Tech's basketball recruiting campaign.

The Hokies signed their fifth player Wednesday, Sean Foggin, 6'4, 230, was an all-stater this year from his Parkersburg, W.Va., team.

For Coach Don DeVoe, the signing meant that he could switch his attention from recruiting this year to recruiting for next year. He is still working to fill the last spot that NCAA rules will allow, but he's started work for the future at the same time.

"This year is probably the hardest we've ever worked," DeVoe said. "We scouted between 50 and 90 players this year. Most of them we saw in person. Some we saw only on film.

"We are still working on three players who are 6'3 or better. But they are probably talking to a dozen schools each. They've probably gotten hundreds of letters and have worked it down to a dozen. We also have a 6'7, a 6'6 and a 6-5 who we are talking to. We should sign the sixth man." 

This is a crucial year in the recruiting wars for Tech. The Hokies lose six men on scholarship to graduation. They lack height and experience with what is coming back. They'll be depending heavily on the newcomers.

"Our priority this year has been boys who could play as freshmen. We need players who can step right in, and we know it," explained DeVoe.

Tech has signed three junior college players which is a high number for one year. "It sounds high to say that we've signed three, but only talked to three others. Those we went after, we got. I'd say that 90 percent of our recruiting has been for high school players.

"We've done well recruiting this year because the players know they have a chance to step right in. Last year, we had most of our team coming back so not many kids wanted to come here. They didn't think they would get a chance to play.

"Also this year, we're feeling the benefit of winning the NIT. Last year, we won it too late to do us much good, but we're able to use it this year."

DeVoe and his assistant coaches Sonny Smith and Jim Hallihan went prepared to fight for the prospects.

"We had a recruiting brochure by our sports information office that was done very professionally. We also had a recruitment film. These added another dimension to recruiting. We were fully able to show a prospective player what we had to offer.

Some schools offer a little more than they're supposed to—like money. "If we get any inclination that the player is looking for a deal, we forget about him. Everything we do is above board. I would have to say that we've lost some great players like that, but that's the only way we do it. Most coaches are ethical. There are some that are willing to get good players anyway they can."

Tech has lost out on some other players because it always works through a player's high school coach.

"We work entirely through the coach. Some schools go directly after the boy, but we go to the coach first. We abide by what the coach asks. Some coaches don't want you talking to the players until the season is over. That has cost us some kids too."

"Quite often coaches will call us and tell us they have a player we should look at. We make an effort to see every boy recommended to us. But if he is a good prospect, we should have heard of him before the coach calls."

"If we don't look at him, it might create ill will. Then a few years later, the coach might have a really super player and he won't work with us because we've made him mad. It can really hurt to have the coach against you."

DeVoe and his staff will start contacting prospective players in next year's recruiting as soon as they return. "The sooner you get there, the better off you are," DeVoe said.

"Right now, they've finished their junior year and not many schools have contacted them. They'll respond to a letter. After the season has started, they'll probably get dozens of letters and they won't respond to us.

Tech's success in recruiting this year will put the pressure on the players returning for last year's team. DeVoe likes that.

"I hope it pushes the others. They know the players we've signed. They know they'd better be ready to play. No one's job is ever safe from year to year. There's nothing has started, they'll probably get dozens of letters and they won't respond to them."

But Tech expected to have depth this year. Injuries eliminated that luxury quickly because the Hokies did not have a good year recruiting last year. "It's important that you have a good year every year. We know that only too well."

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