The Cavaliers and Hokies

COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACHES will tell you that all games on their schedules are important games. But for a lot of schools and coaches there is one game each and every year that is the capitalized The Game. In many instances The Game is an old and honorable rivalry between two state-supported schools. Georgia vs. Georgia Tech ... Alabama-Auburn ... Texas-Texas A&M ... South Carolina-Clemson ... Ole Miss-Mississippi State ... Oklahoma-Oklahoma State ... and Virginia-Virginia Tech.

The first The Game was the annual contest between Yale and Harvard back in the days when the Yales and the Harvards and the Princetons were truly football’s Big Three. Although the Big Three now belongs to college football mythology, Yale and Harvard alumni still regard their annual meeting as The Game.

Time, conditions, economics and shifts in pigskin prowess have reduced many a The Game to lower case status. And what used to be just another contest on the gridiron has become, in several instances, The Game for two schools.

From 1892, when Virginia and North Carolina met for the first and second times (two games were played, Virginia winning the first, 30-18, and UNC winning the second, 26-0), the contest between the Cavaliers and the Tar Heels was The Game for both schools for more than three decades. The coming of Wallace Wade to Duke from Alabama meant the end of that The Game for the Tar Heels. When Wade established Duke as a football winner with national prestige, the Blue Devils became The Game for North Carolina.

Virginia alumni and followers continued, however, to look on the North Carolina game as their The Game. When the late Frank Murray departed Marquette in 1937 to become the coach of the Cavaliers, he promised, in his first speech to an alumni group, to remain at Virginia until the Cavaliers defeated the Tar Heels. He accomplished that goal in 1941, his fifth year in Charlottesville, when Captain Bill Dudley sealed his All-America bid as the Cavaliers beat UNC, 28-7.

(The ’41 Cavaliers, 8-1-0, will hold their 35th reunion tonight in Charlottesville.)

Maryland a No-no

OLDER U.V.A. alumni may still prefer a victory over North Carolina to any other — just now, of course, older and younger alumni would prefer and welcome any Cavalier win — but The Game status of U.Va.-UNC is long past.

When the Atlantic Coast Conference was formed with eight members, and attempt was made to establish four The Games within the conference. There were, had been, The Games between South Carolina and Clemson, and between Duke and North Carolina. N.C. State was paired with Wake Forest and Virginia with Maryland as hopeful The Games. Neither took. N.C. State looks on Duke and UNC as its big rivals, and the ACC can forget a Wake Forest-State game being a Big One.

As for Maryland and Virginia becoming a The Game, no dice.

The Cavaliers and the Terrapins are simply not natural rivals. Never will be.

All the while, Virginia Tech’s The Game was heralded as the Thanksgiving Day clash with VMI in the “South’s Military Classic.” Truth was, the Hokies had long preferred beating the Cavaliers to defeating the Keydets.

In time, economics and recruiting difficulties reduced the Tech-VMI game to an always spirited rivalry, but no longer The Game.

Even so, it wasn’t until 1970 that the Tech-Virginia game became The Game for the two State schools. Economics played a large part in The Game.

A Sellout for Weeks

VIRGINIA BROKE OFF the Tech series after the 1966 game and following a 12-2 victory run by the Hokies. But with the erection of Lane Stadium which, with its completion in 1968, became the largest stadium in the State, there had to be a renewal of the series. After all, one plays where the crowds are. And, besides, Virginia and Tech needed a The Game in the State.

The rivalry was renewed in 1970 and was quickly welcomed as The Game. In the six The Games, beginning with Virginia’s 7-0 victory in 1970, the Cavaliers have won the three even years and the Hokies have won the three odd years.

Over the years, Tech holds a three-game edge over the Cavaliers (28-25) with four games having ended in ties. There’s more than enough antiquity, competitive closeness over the long haul, bitter rivalry, forget-the-season’s-record-this-is-it stance and sellout crowds to make the Tech-Virginia annual meeting The Game.

During Virginia’s opening home game of the season, against William and Mary, there was flashing on the Scott Stadium scoreboard words to the effect that tomorrow’s Tech game was a sellout with only standing-room tickets available.

Virginia’s 10 largest home crowds are listed in this year’s football brochure. The 1974 Tech game crowd of 32,149 is listed third on the list of 10 largest Scott Stadium crowds, with the ’72 and ’71 Tech game crowds in fourth and fifth position. No. 1 on the largest crowds list was the 1952 Duke game, with the 1950 W&M game carried as the second largest crowd.

Here, it has to be believed the ’74 Tech-Virginia crowd was Scott Stadium’s largest. The stadium’s permanent seats number only 25,000 and the ’74 crowd was counted to an odd number, whereas the Duke and W&M game crowds were estimated.

Anyway, with a capacity crowd of 41,000 for last year’s Tech-Virginia game at Lane Stadium, and with another sellout at Scott Stadium tomorrow, both the schools’ athletic officials must, and plan to, enlarge their stadiums’ seating capacities.

Virginia’s plans call for an increase of 12,000 permanent seats; Tech’s plans would increase Lane Stadium’s capacity to the high 50 thousands.