Moir To Shuffle Lineup

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BLACKSBURG—"Sorry, Charlie" not only applies to our fish friend looking for class but also Virginia Tech basketball coach Charlie Moir trying to find some respectability among his first-year Gobbler basketball team.

The losses of last year's Virginia Tech squad were awesome. The Hokies lost Russell Davis. Davis averaged over 20 points for Tech, provided consistent scoring help from inside and outside and was named to a ten-man All-Region team by the United States Basketball Writers Association.

Davis has to his credit 19 straight free throws against William & Mary, a 30-point plus game in a victory over Virginia last season, and numerous wins on his last second charity line attempts or arching jumpers. His fellow teammate, Larry Cooke, was the Gobblers' second-leading scorer (15.9) and followed Davis into the pro ranks.

If that wasn't enough to make Moir look passionately back at Tulane University where he went 18-9 with four returning starters, the Blacksburg coach must follow Tech's best record ever last season, 21-6.

Virginia Tech finished the year ranked 13th in scoring (87.2) and established new school records in most field goals (933), field goal percentage (.502), and seven games over the century mark.

Adding to Moir's worries will be the loss of Dave Sensibaugh, who was a vital assistan and ball-handler for the Hokies, and dependable substitute Kyle McKee.

The most obvious change for the Techmen will not be Moir's new offensive pattern, but former head coach Don DeVoe. DeVoe evacuated after Tech officials found out about his wanting for Ohio State. Ohio State never came, DeVoe never stayed, and Moir never thought twice about coming back to his old school where he was an assistant under Howie Shannon.

"We probably will be making lineup changes until at least the middle of December," said Moir. "I've been pleased with our overall program but the strongest thing in this team's favor so far is senior leadership."

Tech's touted threesome aren't what you call outstanding. Duke Thorpe is the highest acclaimed of the set. Thorpe scored 14.6 points a game and connected on .657 percent of his shots—third ranked statistic in the nation.

Thorpe contributed nearly seven rebounds a game in his sixth-man position but how well he plays undeni the starting unit is not known.

Phil Thieneman, a 6-6 scorer last season, will be given a shot at the wing. Thieneman possesses an exceptional medium range jumper but a host of newcomers will be pushing the starter for playing time.

Ernest Wansley could be the key for the Gobblers. Wansley, 6-11 senior, can clog the middle by his size alone but Moir must get more playing time if the Techmen wish to battle opponents on the boards.

In the backcourt, Marshall Ashford will be fighting Thieneman and sophomore Ronnie Edwards for the starting nod.

Junior college transfer Ron Bell has been effective in the two season openers along with Chris Scott, another freshman.

With Wansley and Sam Foggin in the middle, freshman Les Henson (6'5"), Wayne Robinson (6'9"), and John Greene must provide answers to the Gobblers' departing scorers. Henson has shown sparks of scoring for the Hokies while Robinson could be a double-figure help.

Greene, a proven rebounder, will replace Mike Collins in the Techmen's board tactics while John Byers, Keith Helgeson, and former Virginia Episcopal School standout, Steve Meriwether, complete the squad.

Virginia Tech, now 2-0, has jumped out to an early win streak with victories over Marietta (92-62) and Charleston Baptist (98-70). However, the real test comes tonight in Morgantown, W.Va., against the Mountaineers.

"Those first two games were just warmups," said WVa coach Jody Gardner. "We know their first real test will be us."

How good are the Hokies? Coach Moir couldn't say right now how good the Gobblers will be.

Realistically, the Hokies will be hard put to get anywhere near last season's accomplishments. New players in the wings and Wansley's durability will be key determiners and who can say where the scoring will come.

Moir has been known to turn programs around—at Tulane and Roanoke College where he won a National Championship—but for this year it's "Sorry, Charlie" until next season.