"We're looking forward to having the best team we've had in eight years" said West Virginia U. scout and basketball assistant Bill Ryczaj, a former Mountaineer player.

The coach, in Blacksburg to scout Tech against Charleston Baptist, said that Sid Bostic and freshman guard Lowes Moore have made much of the difference.

When Tech's basketballers left Blacksburg for the snowy drive to Morgantown, several things were obvious. They were in a good frame of mind, having won the first two games without having been extended and that they had not yet been forced to play great defense or lose.

It also was obvious, not only to a Mountaineer assistant coach but to anyone who has followed the fortunes of West Virginia basketball in the years since the likes of Rod Thorn and Fritz Williams left the campus that lately the Mounties have had more lean years than a national congress of Weight Watchers.

Tech and West Virginia play two games yearly on a home-and-home basis and recently the game at the facility which still seems well described as The Hall of the Mountain King has served as a barometer for the Hokies.

Even in their poor years the Mountaineers have been tough at home and Tech's grit and resourcefulness (and a patented magic shot by Russell Davis) last year seemed to foreshadow an outstanding year that could end with an NCAA bid.

The 1976-77 Hokies still are learning to fly but already some predictions are possible.

Tech could have a good-to-extremely good year. The team shooting average is good and there is plenty of point-making talent widely distributed.

Newcomer Les Henson is a better than average shotmaker and has good leaping ability. Freshman Wayne Robinson has made what appears to be an immediate and successful transition from high school to college ball.

Guard Ron Bell needs to mature more under fire but shows bright promise as a ball-handler and scorer.

Duke still is Duke. Thorpe can leap, rebound, shoot, get the team moving, start a rally or bring cheers from the crowd with his favorite left-handed dunk that seems to explode like a shot.

Marshall Ashford, with the lithe, almost feline motion of a cat burgler, guides the offense, steals the ball from the opposition, often leads the fast break and has a shooting touch so soft as a mini-marshmallow falling into melted Parkay.

Phil Thieneman assumes the role of official game starter and serves notice that Tech means business with enough early goals to get things rolling, after which he concentrates on assists or crashes the middle for a layup like a halfback getting his last yard needed for a first down.

New coach Charlie Moir, who resembles a Wall Street banker ready for a meeting with an investment counselor more than the loud-dressing brash Dean Smith types.

Moir couldn't have been more right when he remarked in a news conference following the game that there are no more feathers left on the schedule.

Following West Virginia, the Hokies host an improved Ohio state team Saturday, take on North Carolina at Roanoke on the 11th and have two tournaments this month.