

# A 'Super' for Hokies

Bill Brill  
Sports Editor



There were 10,000 fans on hand to watch Virginia Tech defeat Ohio State Saturday night, but one of them was by far the most important to the Gobbler basketball program.

James Ratiff, a genuine, honest-to-goodness blue chip basketball player from Washington, D.C., was visiting the school where he currently intends to attend next fall.

Ratiff is a 6-8 super from Eastern High, considered one of the nation's premier players.

He was listed on one national magazine's pre-season first five. He is generally considered one of the top three power forwards in the eastern half of the nation, along with Albert King (Bernard's brother) of New York and Gene Banks of Philadelphia.

Basketball Weekly puts Ratiff on its pre-season all-American squad at center, which he could also play.

The significance of Ratiff's visit to Blacksburg cannot be minimized. Later this week, he is expected to make an announcement that he will attend Tech, thus seeking to take the numerous recruiters off his neck.

Such a move is becoming more and more common. Duke's sensational freshman center, Mike Gminski, did it last year.

If Ratiff does come to Tech, it will signal a major breakthrough for Coach Charlie Moir's budding program. Ratiff would be only the second basketball player of his stature ever to select a state college. The other was Virginia's Wally Walker, and all he did was lead the Cavaliers to the ACC championship.

Tech has had many fine players in the past, but none of them had Ratiff's credentials coming out of high school. He is a mortal lock to play for the Metro team in the Capital Classic at Landover, Md., next spring.



Staff Photo by John Cook

## Cheering the Gobblers On Against Ohio State Saturday Night

Never before, not in football or basketball, has Tech been able to recruit a player who was being sought by all of the major powers.

Allan Bristow, who currently is performing well for San Antonio of the NBA, became a genuine superstar in college and led the Hokies to the NIT title. But Bristow was scarcely regarded coming out of high school and, in fact, was turned down by North Carolina, his preferred choice.

If Tech signs Ratiff in the spring, it could be the making of the Gobbler program on a national basis. Although the Hokies do have that NIT championship and last year played in the NCAA, they really are not considered one of the national powers.

Ratiff, if he lives up to his enormous potential, could change all that. It would prove, among other things, that Tech need not live in the enormous shadow cast by ACC recruiters.

Any ACC school would gladly welcome Ratiff to the fold.

It becomes more and more apparent that the Tech program is in good shape under Moir. The present team is 3-1 after beating the Buckeyes by seven. Although this year's schedule includes some very difficult games on the road, and may not produce a tournament-invitation record, Tech should be on the way by '77-78.

The only significant losses from this year's squad will be center Ernest Wansley, who is starting to play up to his ability, and the campus favorite, forward Duke Thorpe.

All of the guards—sophs Marshall Ashford and Ronnie Edwards, junior college transfer Ron Bell and freshman Chris Scott—will return. So will swing man Phil Thieneman.

Up front next season, Moir can count on current freshmen Les Henson and Wayne Robinson and a slimmed-down Sam Foggin.

Tech also is expected to sign Dexter Reid, the slick guard from Norfolk who did not qualify for admission this season. Reid is playing in military school this year, but is considered a certain Hokie of the future.

Players of Ratiff's stature tend to recruit other great players. Just check the rosters of the major powers. They are loaded with scholastic all-Americans. Three ACC powers—North Carolina, Maryland and N.C. State—are loaded with highly recruited scholastic whizzes.

While it is possible to be successful without high school blue chippers—witness Tech's NIT team—it doesn't happen very often. Basketball recruiting is a precise science. The good teams are the ones that do the best recruiting, and all of the coaches know who the players are.

The recruiting of Ratiff and Reid would further enhance a significant shift in Tech's basketball situation. Remember the NIT team, which was considered too short, too white and too Virginian?

There are only three scholarship players from the state on the present team—Thorpe, Scott and Henson. Reid would keep it at three.

The present Tech squad is dominated by blacks. Thieneman and Foggin were the only whites who played against Ohio State. Both Ratiff and Reid are black. Nobody needs to be told that basketball has long been the black man's game.

There also was another interesting feature to the Tech-OSU clash. The team revealed its new home uniforms, and written across the front is "Hokies". Tech may be the only school in the nation preferring to be known by its unofficial nickname, rather than the nationally recognized Gobblers.

Hokies or Gobblers, what have you, Tech basketball may be on the way to some big things.