There have been a few basketball high-
lights in the history of the Roanoke Civic
Center, but nothing to rival tonight’s sold-
out clash between Virginia Tech and North
Carolina.

Tickets are impossible to find, even though
the game will be carried on television
(channel 7, 8 p.m., with the redoubtable
Bill King and the illustrious Jerry Joy-
ce).

Tech publicity man Wendell Seay says his
phone has been ringing off the hook all
afternoon, with requests for tickets coming
in large orders. The media has generally
neglected Tech games, which has seemed
a bit odd. The Tech fans have been waiting
for something this season.

Obviously, the Tar Heels are a big draw.
One small paper in North Carolina asked for
three press tickets. You can judge for
yourself the reason for that.

A Roanoke sellout is rare enough, but
never before has a nationally ranked team
appeared at the Civic Center.

The Tar Heels come to town ranked
No. 12, which proves only that the early
season rankings don’t mean very much.

UNC started the year No. 3, lost a one-point
 overtime to Wake Forest in the Big Four,
then fell to No. 9.

This week, against Marshall by 20, they
dropped three more slots. Obviously
some of the voters decided to vote only for
unbeaten.

Despite Carolina’s obvious ability, Tech
has an excellent chance to win. The Hokies,
like UNC, are 3-1. Their loss also was by a
single point, at West Virginia, a game in
which Tech had a chance to make some
free throws in the final seconds.

Tech Coach Charlie Moir says he—and his
team—are eagerly looking forward to
his own first game. He had a week to rest
for UNC since beating Ohio State. Mean-
while, Carolina has won at Michigan State
and at home against Indiana in Action.

The Tar Heels present some problems for
the Tech defense, not the least of which
is considerable experience. Four starters
return from last year’s team, which lost
just two regular season games.

Three of them—center Tom LaGarde,
forward Walter Davis and guard Phil
Ford—played on the victorious Olympic
Team. All three, plus guard John Kuester,
are three-year regulars. That’s as much ex-
perience as any team in the nation.

The one new face in the UNC lineup is
the shining rookie, Mike O’Koren. The 6-
foot 7-inch C. N. “Doc” Robinson is bidding
to be the ACC rookie of the year. In Carolina’s
complicated rating system (the Tar Heels
do not list their players according to scori-
ng averages), O’Koren is No. 1.

Actually, O’Koren has replaced La-
Garde in the lineup, with the 6-9 senior
moving to center to take over for the grad-
uate transfer, Mike Kupchak, now with the
Washington Bullets.

“T’ve really been impressed with La-
Garde,” said Moir. “He’s up to 230 pounds
now and he’s very aggressive. He always
played in the shadow of Kupchak, but he’s
a natural center. He’s taking the ball to the
basket with a strong move and if we don’t
watch out, he’ll stuff us.”

That means the center matchup will be
a key. It is also a battle between Waltan-
slay, has been playing much better of
late, and had one of his finest games against
Ohio State. Smith has scored 12 of his game
from Ernstein if we’re to have a
chance to win,” Moir concedes.

The full-court press made up this way:
Tech will send Phil Thiessen, a
6-5 senior, against the 6-5 Davis, also a senior.
Duke Thorpe, Tech’s high scoring senior,
will have the task of guarding O’Koren.

In the backcourt, the Hokies will be
open against Vesta Ford and Tom LaGarde
against Ford and Kuester. UNC has a defi-
nite edge here, but Carolina’s"