Moir's Hokies Eye Dangerous Dayton

By JERRY VERNON
Sports Writer

Charlie Moir cares little for national prestige if it means a loss of team morale to his Virginia Tech cagers.

"I'd like to be playing teams with a little less national recognition in December," said the first year Hokie coach. "This can get your morale down. We've competed favorably with everyone, but I'd like to win some games, too."

After a narrow loss to the 12th ranked University of North Carolina over the past weekend, Moir gets part of his wish tonight at nine in the University of Dayton Invitational Tournament. A win against the unranked, but 5-0 host team should give Tech another shot at a team of national prominence, seventh ranked Alabama, Saturday night in the tourney's championship round.

"My assistant (Don Brown) scouted Dayton against the University of New Orleans last (Monday) night," warned Moir. "They're very disciplined and they play excellent defense."

Dayton ripped New Orleans 82-68 as the Tech scout watched the game. "They beat them by 14... and that's impressive," said the Hokie coach.

Hotshot outside shooter Jack Zimmerman and 6-6 forward Jim Paxton, who hits around 20 points a game, lead what Moir called the Flyers "patient offense."

"The strong point for them is that they're playing on their home court," conceded the coach. "We'll have to be at our very best in order to beat them at Dayton. They look to run as much as we will."

The Flyers might be hard pressed to do anything as well as Tech - rebound. The Hokies are pulling down 44 rebounds a game to their opponent's 34 snare. Forward Duke Thorpe has grabbed 10.2 errant shots a game for Tech while leading Hokie scorers with an 18.8 average. Ernest Wansley has been second best at grabbing missed shots off the boards for the Gobblers with 8.4 credits per game while perimeter watchman Marshall Ashford stands runnerup in the point category with 11.8 per outing.

This trio along with forward Phil Thienenman and guard Ron Bell should make Dayton wish it had more than a host team advantage tonight. But on Saturday night the Hokies may do a little bit of lantern rubbing themselves.

If heavily favored Alabama (4-0) whips Oklahoma State (4-2) in the tourney opener Friday and Tech follows through with a win over Dayton, the Hokies will find themselves opposing a national power for the second time in a week.

"When you go into a tourney you have to win both nights to take the tourney," said Moir. "I think I'd rather play Dayton than Alabama on opening night. Of course, they'll (Alabama) be picked to beat Oklahoma State."

The Crimson Tide will also be favorites over Tech if the two collide. Alabama has four returning starters from last year's 23-5 team and Southeastern Conference champions. But the loss of 6-9 Leon Douglas changed the look of Alabama basketball about like a tidal wave hitting the coast - everything tall disappeared.

"They don't have a big man at the post like Douglas this year," admitted Moir. "But they don't have too many weaknesses. They do it all. They've got tremendous personnel."

The Tide probably has the best pair of guards in its league. Senior T.R. Dunn and junior Anthony Murray head Alabama's fast break offense which is backed with a bulk of experience.

The remaining team in the tourney, Oklahoma State, is much like its towering 7-3 center Lonnie Boeckmann - too trim to push many teams hard. The Cowboys rely heavily on 5-11 guard Ronnie Daniel whose trying to get his shooting ability back after a shoulder injury last season.

Tech, according to Moir, "will have to be sky high" to take the Dayton Invitational. But, in his words, the Hokies "are ready, willing and anxious to go."