Tech Hosts Wesleyan

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Charlie Moir has a lot more to his smile about now than he did after his Virginia Tech cagers copped honors in the Times-Dispatch Invitational Tournament last Thursday.

After the tourney Moir believed Tech had paid a high price for the title — the loss of star forward Duke Thorpe for at least one game. But now, a smiling Moir says Tech's season leading scorer (16.6) will start tonight at eight when Texas Wesleyan invades Cassell Coliseum.

"I'm surprised at Duke's progress," said the first year Hokie coach. "He should be able to play and he will be in his best shape of the year."

But this top condition does not mean Thorpe will hit the court at full speed. A knee injury the 6-6 forward suffered in Richmond has healed, but a groin injury still hampers the Tech leader's game.

"I feel like the groin injury is going to linger all year," admitted Moir. "He'll always be at 85-90 per cent, but his charley horse thing seems to be gone now."

Tech board strength which suffered last week should come back strong tonight with Thorpe playing in better physical condition. His 7.7 rebounding average is surpassed only by 6-11 center Ernest Wansley's 7.8 mark.

The Hokies might need the big men's prowess under the boards against a Wesleyan squad which has outrebounded its opponents this season 44 to 35. Tech has outboarded its opponents this season 39.8 to 33.6.

Rebounding is not Charlie Moir's biggest concern going into this game. The Hokie coach must convince his players not to bask in past tourney glory and take the Texans too lightly. On the surface Hokie cagers may have just reason to snub the visitors.

Uncovering facts on Wesleyan basketball is much like looking into the financial assets of Lockheed Corporation. You know the Texans have a team, but the squad's real assets are hard to find.

One Wesleyan sports information secretary was working through her school's break Tuesday and said she knew something about the team. Her knowledge did not include the squad's record or its top players.

The school's hometown publication, The Fort Worth Star Telegram, disclosed Wesleyan's 9-3 record going into Tuesday night's game with Navy in Maryland, but a newspaper spokesman was unable to name a single player on the squad's roster.

With all this in mind one could justly wonder if Tech can approach this game against the Texoma Conference members seriously.

Moir thinks his squad realizes the ability of Wesleyan and its governing body, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (N.A.I.A.) which many consider a lightweight to the more respected NCAA.

"At this day and time I think players have learned you don't take anyone lightly or you'll get your toes stumped," warned the Hokie coach. "They (Texas) have a veteran ball club, but I know we're not as likely to get as psyched up for them as for the University of Virginia."

The Hokies will be clashing with no highly acclaimed squad tonight even though Wesleyan claims a couple of players who can consistently ripple the nets. The Texas' highest scorer, 6-1 guard Donnie Kleiver, averages 22 points a game while 6-8 center Wayne Waymain's 14 point average stands second to the postman's 12 rebounds an outing.

Another 6-1 guard, Carl Webb, and 6-4 forward Gerry Greene, and 6-5 forward Vern Wright round out the Wesleyan starting lineup.

Moir plans to send his regular starters, Thorpe, Wansley, 6-5 forward Phil Thieneman and 6-1 guard Ron Bell and 6-2 guard Marshall Ashford, against Wesleyan. "We won't change the starting lineup right now, but I'm sure some of the other guys will play a good bit."

The same starters will probably get the nod when Tech travels to New York for an encounter with St. Bonaventure Saturday. Last season the Hokies blew out the postseason tournament bound Bonnies 115-74 in Blacksburg. Life can be tough on the road and Moir is the first to agree.

"I'd have to say they (St. Bonaventure) were the toughest team this week," admitted Moir. "I've never played there, but it's rough when you're on the road."

The Bonnies have posted a 6-2 season record going into tonight's match at DePaul behind the shooting of two hot scorers. Senior center Essie Hollis averages 19.8 points a game while 6-6 junior forward Greg Sanders pours through 19.1 an outing. The 6-6 Hollis could find his team leading rebounding average dip Saturday when he is defended by Wansley.

The Bonnies 36 rebound average a game looks better when their 38 per cent team shooting comes into consideration. Tech had connected on 50 per cent of its floor shoots.

Junior guard Glenn Hagan heads the Bonnie outside attack with a 13 point average and is joined on the perimeter by 6-2 senior Jim Baron. Sophomore Tim Waterman, 6-9 forward, closes out the squad's starters. The biggest problem for the Bonnies may be depth, something they have little of compared to Tech's Les Henson, Wayne Robinson and Chris Scott. Barry Atkinson, a 7-1 junior center and Dan Viglianco, a 6-5 sophomore guard, shoot little, but provide most of the relief for the St. Bonaventure starters.

"They have their power back from last year," noted Moir. "Hollis and Sanders are shooting right at 60 per cent and from the floor that is excellent."