MATTHEWS CALLS GOLDBERS’ STAR ‘BEST INSIDE’

By BOB MOSKOWITZ

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When it comes to Duke’s Thorpe, Bill Matthews knows what he is talking about.

Dapper and bow-tied, the towering figure nearly everyone addresses as “Moose,” Matthews has been a part of Virginia Tech athletics for 36 years.

Not only is William B. Matthews the Gobbler’s assistant athletic director, he once was the top scorer in the school’s basketball history and prior to accepting his current position, the bespectacled bull was a student-athlete and assistant coach the Tech basketball team through the 1962-63 seasons.

Matthews, now 42, and intrinsically involved in all portions of the Tech athletic program, will wax enthusiastically with little provocation about the 6-foot-6 Thorpe, the product of West Point High School.

The Gobbler’s loss in the Hampton Coliseum at 8 p.m. Wednesday when they meet the University of Virginia in the second of three games scattered throughout the State this season, and for Thorpe the appearance marks fulfillment of a dream.

It also will bring the congenial senior a step nearer two school records still held by but one biggest of his boosters.

The career mark of 100 games and 77.7 points per game last three-year span (after the freshman year) are both within reach of Thorpe, who already has produced the 11th-best season of field goal shooting in Tech annals.

Last season, the somewhat pierre-frocked and mustel-like heady youngster snared 87 per cent of his shots.

Going into the battle with the Cavaliers, Thorpe has been in 89 games, 66 not counting his freshman season.

Matthews easily and eagerly recalls his high school days when the Coliseum was first completed (Fall of 1969).

“When I first walked in it, I remember saying: ‘Wow! I sure hope I play there some time,’” Thorpe was recalling the other day.

Just as clear in his mind are the individual changes he has undergone — and enjoyed — this season compared to last Winter. It was then he emerged as a super substitute under Don DeVoe (now at Wyoming).

This season, Thorpe is a starter. He is, indeed, the Gobbler’s bellwether as their top scorer and rebounder (tied for the latter with Ernest Wansley) and most accurate shooter.

Starting is just one change Coach Charlie Moir has instituted that excites Thorpe.

“Last year, we usually only practiced half-court. Coach DeVoe worked on defense, defense, defense,” Thorpe says.

“This year, we are both, but whatever it is, we work full-court all the time.

“It’s better because it keeps us in tough. Of course, we were in great shape to begin with. We ran two miles a day before regular practice started.”

Moir has also given Thorpe the green light to take jump shots from the 16-18 foot range.

“Devoe never let me. I think I’m pretty good at the outside shot,” says Duke with typical and not reticent courage.

Certainly he’ll need the shot if he is to realize full potential of another dream — playing in the National Basketball Association.

If that materializes, there’s always foreign countries. Thorpe has already heard from teams in Venezuela, and Paris, France.

For Duke Thorpe, indeed, horizons are unlimited.

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EXPERT AT BANK SHOT

Virginia Tech’s Duke Thorpe

Virginia’s other freshman recruit, forward Joe Tucker, has dropped out of school at the end of the first semester, mainly because he felt he wasn’t playing enough. Perry scored six points in the season opener against Randolph College and then didn’t play again.

Perry’s defection was not altogether unexpected. Before the season, ACC coaches voiced concern that they might not be able to keep as many players happy (playing time players happy).

“Just about all the high school players we recruit are used to the superstar status,” points out Maryland’s Coach Larry Drake.

“Then we come along and tell them how great we think they are, too, and tell them how much they mean to our program. Recruiting is difficult enough, but once they’re enrolled and the season begins, it takes even more effort to keep these eager superstars happy when they’re riding the bench.”

So far, the Cavaliers, who are holding their opponents to under 60 points per game, are going at a similar pace as last year; “We aren’t as concerned about the wins and losses as we are about improving individual performances — then the team can take care of themselves,” says Holland.

That’s the line he used last season. The results from that sort of outlook are history.

Wednesday, Peninsula-area alumni and family day with Virginia hosts Wake as theState’s top teams — each reached the NCAA post-season playoffs last year.