Next 8 Days Are Crucial
As Gobblers Hit the Road

If there is one thing Charlie Moir hates worse than flying, it is flying in bad weather, which is one reason the Virginia Tech basketball coach was so edgy before taking off for St. Bonaventure Friday afternoon.

"Sure, there's a temptation to worry about it," said Moir of the weather. "Of course, once we get there—if we get there—it shouldn't bother us that much."

Understandably, Moir is just as concerned about the Bonnies movers by 41 points to Tech last year at the Roanoke Civic Center. Coach Jim Satalin's club rebounded from that setback to go 17-10 and it is 6-3 this season, with the losses coming against Princeton, Georgetown and DePaul.

Having won four games in a row following a 30-point loss to fourth-ranked Alabama in the finals of the Dayton Invitational, the Hokies have improved their record to 8-3. It is in the next eight days, however, that Moir expects his team's true colors to be revealed.

"We play St. Bonaventure, Jacksonville and Virginia on the road," said Moir, "and then we follow that up with a game at home against Oral Roberts. If we could go 4-0, it would have to start our thinking in the direction of the NCAAs."

Until they survived a University of Dayton comeback to win in the first round of the Invitational, the Hokies had experienced problems on the road. Ironically, Moir feels St. Bonaventure is the same kind of club as Dayton, which fell victim to Tech, 76-75.

"Dayton had a good shooting forward (Jim Paxson) who couldn't miss," reported Moir, "and I thought we played pretty good defense against him. I hope we don't have the same problem with Greg Sanders (a 19 point-per-game scorer for the Bonnies)."

St. Bonaventure's top player is 6-foot-6 "power" forward Essie Hollis, who averages nearly 20 points and 10 rebounds a game, shooting 58 per cent from the field. The starting center is 6-9 Tim Waterman, but Moir is equally fearful of a lineup that sees Hollis in the pivot, with 6-6 Delmer Harrod moving to forward.

Tech will probably be without the services of starting guard Marshall Ashford. Ashford, who has been a leader for the Gobblers, is suffering from the flu and has been sick for several days. Phil Thieneman will probably be moved from forward to guard with freshman Les Henson starting at forward.

Injuries could play a big role in this afternoon's televised contest between defending ACC tournament champion Virginia and the team the Cavaliers beat in the final, North Carolina.

After an overtime loss to Wake Forest in the the final of this year's Big Four Tournament, the Tar Heels have reeled off eight straight wins, rising to No. 6 in the national rankings.

"I look at it this way," observed Carolina Coach Dean Smith, "we lost (Mitch) Kupchak and they lost (Wally) Walker to the pros. Other than that, it's the same two teams that met in the final."

In the Cavaliers, 5-3, North Carolina will be facing a club that is hurting with 6-10 sophomore Otis Fulton bothered by elbow problems. "The coaches have are saying Otis is doubtful," confirmed UVa publicist John Gordon, "but, he will make the trip."

"Steve Castellan's been playing so good for them (22 points and 16 rebounds against Wake) that losing Otis shouldn't hurt them except from a depth standpoint," Smith remarked. "We recruited Castellan; it doesn't surprise me that he's playing that well."

The first 10 minutes should be crucial, as the Cavaliers will try to force Carolina into a deliberate, half-court game. If the Tar Heels get the lead early, it is unlikely that Virginia will be able to run with them.