Trip Sizes Gobbler Future

When the Virginia Tech cagers traveled to Hampton Tuesday, Charlie Moir had a couple of roles to fulfill. His immediate responsibility is to prepare his Hokie squad for tonight’s encounter with the University of Virginia.

The coach’s other role rests in the area of public relations. It’s a job that will determine the future of Tech basketball. Three Hokie prospects hail from Hampton and Moir would like nothing better than to transform the trio into teammates next year.

Moir could probably use Arthur Jones, Boo Williams and George Bell in his inside game next season since the Hokies lose 6-6 Duke Thorpe, 6-11 Ernest Wansley and 6-5 Phil Thieneman to graduation this year.

Jones, a 6-7 senior at Hampton High School, averaged 21.3 points an outing last season and continues to hold his own this year.

“He’s a tremendous offensive player ... extremely quick and an excellent shooter,” says Moir. “He’s going to have to work on his defense. All of them will. College is a much more aggressive type game than these kids face in high school.”

Thesbus High School star, 6-5 Boo Williams, may have fewer transitory problems than Jones. “He’s a physical type player,” explains Moir. “He’s about as mobile as Arthur and has a stronger inside game.”

The final recruit of the Tidewater trio is a 7-4 senior who has not played prep basketball for the past two seasons. Since the Times-Dispatch Tournament two weeks ago George Bell has received a lot of local ink. That’s when former Hokie star Calvin Wade introduced the Hampton kid who grew faster than his knees could support. Bell missed and then finally was declared ineligible for prep cage action due to surgery which sidelined him for two seasons.

While Moir’s recruiting focuses on the lane game the coach has not forgotten the perimeter aspect of basketball. He’s looking at Blacksburg’s 6-1 Sidney Snell who currently averages 24.8 points a game. “We’re interested in him that’s for sure,” says Moir. “He’s a tremendous athlete with great instinct.”

The coach went out-of-town to look at another potential guard — 5-10 Greg White from Mullins, W.Va. “He’s a good ball-handler and a real good outside shooter,” explains Moir.

The list of potential Hokie stars goes on to the junior college level. Dexter Reid plans to transfer from Massanutten Academy next year and Tech may convince John Hillenbrand from New York to transfer to Tech from his hometown school in Jamestown.

“We’ve heard good things about him,” says Moir who talked with Hillenbrand last week when the Hokies played St. Bonaventure in New York. “But we haven’t seen him play and we can’t say anything until we do.”

Besides these ten top recruits, Moir and company are looking at some twenty other prospects. Six out of this list can be signed and the coach admits he’d love to have all his freshmen come from that top ten.

But as the coach says several other schools are competing for the talent. Tech has received positive response from Watts, Ratiff, Bell and Jones. A month ago everyone considered Reid destined for Tech, but now the junior college student is beginning to look at some other schools.

The Hokies comply with the Atlantic Coast Conference letter day and can sign no one until March 12. For this reason Moir remains reserved when speaking about future Hokies.

“We’ve got a lot on our list,” he explains, “and we’ll just take the first one we get.”

“We’re going to check him out,” admits Moir. “You don’t find too many guys that big, but he has a long way to go.”

Moir found one kid almost as big as Bell in Massachusetts. Craig Watts averaged 28.3 points a game last season and, in Moir’s words, “He’s a seven-footer. That’s the main thing you can say about him.” Watts’ was also named to two pre-season prep All American squads.

Watts, along with highly-publicized 6-8 James Ratiff, are the Hokies’ top two prospects. Ratiff, a Washington, D.C. product who carries a C average, shoots beyond the 20-foot mark frequently. Last season he scored 24 points a game, nabbed 15 rebounds, passed for six assists and found time to block four shots per outing.

Moir has also spotted a player in North Carolina who could help the Hokie inside game. George DeVone, a 6-9 senior from Newton Grove, plays the inside like Williams. His aggressive style would provide strength to the Tech defense.