Gobblers, Cavaliers Tangle Tonight

By JERRY VERNON
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Two weeks ago when Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia collided a tournament championship was at stake. Tech took it and a handsome trophy, 65-60.

Tonight when the state rivals clash at 7:30 in Hampton no glamorous awards are offered, but the winner gets something more valuable—a ride back into victory lane.

“We’re going into this game with a loss,” said Tech Coach Charlie Moir. “We’d like to beat the University of Virginia and they like to beat Virginia Tech.”

The Hokies (8-4) enter the contest with hopes of rebounding from last week’s 94-82 loss to St. Bonaventure in New York. The Cavaliers venture into the match in sad shape with successive losses to Wake Forest, the University of North Carolina and William & Mary. In fact, Virginia has managed to whip only Davidson since the Hokies sent the Cavs down the road to a plummeting 5-5 record.

“The game in Richmond was a turnaround,” recalled Moir. “We played bad in the first half and they played bad in the second.”

In the Richmond tournament the Cavs were hampered with an almost nonexistent outside game from 6-3 guard Billy Langlois. He managed only seven of his team high 15.5 average in the last Tech matchup.

“By the second half their guards played poorly,” said Moir. “I’m sure they’ll try to correct that this time. I think their guards are capable of a much better game.”

Langlois may not get an opportunity to prove his abilities on the perimeter tonight. He may have to seek revenge under the basket since 6-8 junior teammate Marc Iavarone could miss the contest due to a lingering bout with the flu. The Cavs’ missed forward Iavarone’s 6.9 rebound and 11.4 point average against William & Mary Monday night in Charlotteville.

His absence throws the bulk of the Cavalier board game on the back of 6-8 postman Steve Castellan who pulls down 8.8 rebounds a game. Langlois can offer some assistance but will find life under the basket tough against Tech’s 6-6 Duke Thorpe, 6-11 Ernest Wansley and 6-5 Phil Thieman.

This Hokie trio has averaged pulling down 23 rebounds a game this season and may raise that mark a bit if Iavarone misses the action. Tech’s abilities under the net will depend on the performance of alternating Cav forwards Mike Owens and Otis Fulton. The 6-10 Fulton provides the height to combat Wansley, but the Virginia sophomore may be inhibited with an elbow injury. Owens, a 6-4 freshman, should see plenty of action as the Cavaliers try to improve their inside game plan.

“They like to move the ball inside,” said Moir. “They run a lane offense attack and they don’t take too many bad shots.”

The coach expects to overcome what he called Virginia’s height advantage with team speed led by guards Ron Bell and Marshall Ashford who are averaging a respective 10.6 and 9.1 points a game.

“We’re going to try to play real hard nose defense on their end of the court,” warned Moir. “We’ll play pressure defense and go after them half court.”

The success of the Tech pressure will depend upon Virginia guard reaction. Langlois can handle the stress along with 5-10 sophomore Bob Stokes. But if Langlois is switched to forward 6-3 freshman Garland Jefferson must weave the Virginia offense through the Hokie defense.

The Tech disadvantage in height will be amplified even more this Saturday when the Hokies confront Jacksonville University in Florida. After a slow start, the Dolphins have raised their record to 6-4 with consecutive wins over South Florida and Marshall Universities.

“I know they have a big basketball team,” admitted Moir. “They have a 7-1 postman and a 7-0 substitute.”

The Dolphins’ tallest player, low postman John Richards, has missed his squad’s last two games with mononucleosis and is not expected to start against Tech. Jacksonville’s other tall man, junior Felton Young, should get the starting job. His 9.9 point and 5.5 rebound average looked fine in the Dolphins’ consecutive wins.

Despite the loss of Richards, Jacksonville fans have found plenty to smile about. Dolphin star guard, 6-2 Kent Glover, came back strong with 13 points against South Florida after sitting out six games with a sprained ankle. The senior wingman posts a 17.5 game average and serves as his squad’s floor leader.

Rounding out the Dolphin starting lineup are 6-8 high postman James Ray, 6-1 point guard Ricky Williams and 6-3 wingman Randy Williams.

Despite the considerable Dolphin height advantage Moir has no plans to switch his starting five in Florida.

“I don’t think I’ll change anyone,” said the coach. “Jacksonville will have a mismatch with our smaller men.”