Hokies Favored Tonight

By JERRY VERNON
Sports Writer

When Ohio University Coach Dale Bandy learned of Virginia Tech’s 122-70 romp of Birmingham Southern, he only laughed, “You think we can get Birmingham to come up here?”

The Bobcats’ coach would probably prefer to replace the Hokies’ presence with Birmingham tonight in Convocation Center on his Ohio homecourt in Athens. Bandy dreads meeting Tech as much as if the Gobblers were a leader in the Mid-American Conference.

“We’ve seen them and we feel like they’re a very strong club,” he admitted. “We feel if they were in our conference they would be one of the top teams.”

Ohio is not a top team in its league. In fact, the Bobcats stand a dismal 3-7 in Mid American play and 7-13 overall. Records, most coaches claim, don’t say much. However, in the Bobcats case, at least three past games give the Hokies (16-7) a strong edge in tonight’s clash.

Tech blasted Marietta College by 30 points in its season opener while Ohio sliced the same squad by 13. The Bobcats lost to Marshall by eight before Tech trimmed the West Virginia school.

In following the tradition of saving the best for last, look at Tech and Ohio’s final common opponent — Northern Illinois. The Hokies blasted NIU 92-55 in Blacksburg. Ohio with its own home court advantage lost to the Illinois school by 16 points.

“Naturally we’re impressed with Tech’s ability,” said Bandy. “They’re a very quick team except for their postman [6-11 Ernest Wansley] who has good mobility for his size.”

Wansley could prove to be too tough to contain for either of the Bobcats’ alternating centers — 6-7 Ernie Whitus and 6-7 Mike Borden. Whitus, a transfer student from the University of Kentucky, averages a respectable 11.4 points a game, but has played in only 14 contests this year. He missed six games due to a variety of medical problems. Bandy expects his starting postman to play little against the Hokies. Whitus was discharged from the hospital only a week ago after receiving treatment for an infected leg.

Borden, the backup center, carries an odd story with his mediocre 1.8 point average. The sophomore sued Ohio University last season for the right to play even though he could see from only one eye. He won the case and proceeded to make the team this year.

The Bobcats’ ineffectual post position has been the dooming blow to Ohio this season.

“Everybody is taller than us,” admitted Bandy. “So the boards have been a problem for us all year.”

Leading the Bobcats’ rebounding struggle are 6-5 sophomore forwards’ Steve Scaggs and Tim Joyce who average a respective 7.5 and 6.6 snare a game. The duo also leads the slowdown Ohio attack with 19.9 and 17.1 averages.

“We’ll have to control the temp of the game,” warned the Bobcat coach. “You have to do that with your offense while also doing a fine job with your defense.”