If ACC Rejects Hokies, Tech May Look Elsewhere

It is far too early to assess Virginia Tech's chances of gaining admittance into the Atlantic Coast Conference in light of the expansion committee's present trip to Blacksburg.

But it certainly opens a lot of possibilities.

One school of thought, proposed by a man close to the Tech scene, is that this is the Hokies' final bid to join the ACC. They have been passed over before.

This person's opinion is that if Tech realizes it can't get into the ACC now, it may adopt a different stance on the formation of some new league.

An assortment of conferences has been proposed—some including major football schools, others including mostly state schools with the idea of becoming basically a basketball league.

Only one thing can be certain. Tech needs to be in some kind of conference.

The Hokies haven't exactly been dying as an independent. They have been to the NCAA basketball tournament twice and the NIT twice, winning it dramatically on their last try.

They went to the Liberty Bowl twice in the late '60s and last year to the NCAA baseball regional.

Yet Tech is still a school crying for an athletic identity. Being in a conference would be a tremendous boost to the overall program. It would help in many ways, not the least of which is in scheduling.

The way the NCAA is presently structured, the only independents who can make it big are Notre Dame, Penn State and Georgia Tech, perhaps one or two more. And even Penn State and Georgia Tech are presently in basketball leagues.

Getting into the ACC would be of the greatest benefit to the Hokies in basketball and the so-called "minor sports."

Football teams pretty much determine their own destiny. Win enough, and you get a bowl bid. But it would help if Tech could claim a conference championship.

However, good schedules are made up so far in the future that even if the ACC accepts Tech, it would be a long time before the Hokies were eligible for the championship.

The biggest impact would be in basketball. Joining the nation's best publicized basketball conference would have to be a tremendous boost to Tech's recruiting.

Thus far, even though Tech has had numerous good basketball teams, it has not been able to recruit the superstar. As an independent, it always is going to be hard to do that. But any number of great players want to participate in the ACC, and many of them don't care for which school.

Clearly it would have a tremendous effect on the basketball schedule. Crowds at Blacksburg have been way down this year although the team has won 16 games. There has been only one sellout. Cassell Coliseum was barely more than half full for schools like Oral Roberts and Memphis State.

As a member of the ACC, Tech would immediately benefit from seven great home games. All would be certain sellouts. The schedule would include more than 50 percent of the games against ACC opposition opposition.

Over the years, Tech has played all of the ACC teams except Maryland. But the Hokies are never sure whether they can get those games, and rest assured they would not if they started beating the ACC teams regularly. That is the plight that schools like UNC-Charlotte face.

Tech's minor sports also would have something on which to base a season. The Gobblers have had good baseball and golf teams and excellent individuals in track. Yet these teams play schedules against nameless, and they seldom create an impression.

Playing for ACC championships in all sports would have to help in the recruiting and the publicity for these teams.

So, there is no question that getting into the ACC would be an enormous boost for Tech. The Hokies have superior facilities in all sports. They want desperately to have a fine program. But, as an independent, they have no place to hang their hat.

Does the ACC want Tech? That is the $128,000 question.

Virginia athletic director Gene Corrigan is a strong supporter of Tech's bid. Yet two influential UVa grads called this office Friday to protest Virginia's backing of the Hokies.

"Why" asked one, "do we want to help Tech out?"

Even with UVa's support, however, Tech's chances of gaining admittance into the ACC must be considered something of a longshot. South Carolina, a former member still playing most ACC schools in football, withdrew its own request when it was learned it would not be accepted.

East Carolina also would like to get into the ACC. Presumably, so would Richmond. In facilities, Tech beats those schools hands down.

The ACC, if it expands, might want Georgia Tech. Even though they are in the Metro Seven, the Jackets might well be interested. What has not been determined is whether the ACC really wants anybody, or whether it desires to remain a seven-team league.

As far as this area is concerned, it would be super if Tech should get into the league. Nothing else could possibly give Tech as much direction for its athletic program.

Should the Hokies fail, however, they would be well advised to seek some other option. Remaining an independent is the best way to remain in relative obscurity.