Tech Vs. UVa: It's for the Bragging Rights

By BILL BRILL
Sports Editor

The first two meetings between Virginia and Virginia Tech have been dead even this year. Not only has each school won a game, but the point totals are identical.

Bragging rights until next season will be on the line tonight for the rubber game at the Roanoke Civic Center. Tipoff is at 8 p.m., and there are 1,000 or so tickets still available.

Tech defeated UVa in the finals of the Richmond Times-Dispatch tournament, 64-50. The Cavaliers returned the favor, 55-50, at Hampton in January.

This has all the earmarks of being the best game of the three.

Actually, that wouldn't take much doing. Neither team has played well against the other yet. The Hampton game, in fact, was one of the worst shooting exhibitions of the year. It was really Tech's low point and the Cavaliers weren't much better.

Although Tech has a 17-4 record to Virginia's 9-15, the game rates as a tossup. The Cavaliers, you see, have played the tougher schedule, and they have been given signs in the last two games that UVa is finally arriving as the team Terry Holland hoped he'd have in December.

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If Virginia is to have any chance at all of defending its ACC championship in next week's tournament, the Cavaliers must gain some momentum.

"Time is growing awfully short," said Holland. "We've been playing better now because we're playing with more confidence. But there is no little of the season left."

Likewise, the game means a lot to Tech, and not just because Virginia is the opponent. The Hokies rebounded from a loss at Georgia U. to upset Wake Forest in overtime, 98-97, on the road last Saturday.

"That was the highlight of the season," said Coach Charlie Moir. Strangely, Tech has trouble putting good games back-to-back. The Gobblers all year have beaten some teams they didn't figure to whip, while losing some games they should have won.

Moir points out West Virginia in Blacksburg and Ohio U. as two of those games.

"This is a very important game for us," Moir understates. Unless Tech wins tonight and in its regular season finale against Marquette Saturday, the season will end early for the Gobblers. With 19 wins, Tech would retain some hopes of a post-season bid.

The key matchups are at guard. In the Richmond game, Marshall Ashford and Ronnie Bell dominated the UVa backers. Ashford and Bell combined for 42 points in the stunning win over Wake Forest.

"Led by Billy Langlo, the Virginia guards got their revenge at Hampton," Holland pointed out. There has been a change in the Cavaliers lineup, where junior college transfer William Napper has all but disappeared from the scene.

Napper did not play in the last two games after going scoreless in the three prior contests. Veteran Dave Koontz now starts with Langlo in the Virginia backcourt.

There are two important ACC games tonight. Ninth-ranked North Carolina will try and avenge one of its league defeats at home against N.C. State (Channel 7, 9 p.m.).

The Pack (15-8; 5-4 ACC) won by two points at Raleigh. UNC is 9-4 overall, 7-5 in the league and still hopeful of at least a tie for regular season honors. Once again, however, UNC will be without center Tommy LaGarde, which should give State the edge in rebounding.

Clemson goes after its 20th win against visiting Duke (14-0; 24). The Tigers, who have lost five, are 7-4 in the league. No oth- er Clemson team ever won 20 games in the regular season. The Tigers won the first meeting in overtime, back when Duke had Tate Armstrong. The Blue Devils are 5-7 without him.

Among Southern Conference teams, Appalachian clouts out its regular season at Western Carolina and Mercy visits East Carolina, where Dave Patton will be coaching his last home game for the Trojans.

South Alabama plays at VCU in the only other in-state game.

The Dixie Conference tournament starts at four sites. Opening games have Averett at Meredith, N.C., Wesleyan at Greensboro, St. Andrews at Christopher Newport and Virginia Wesleyan at UNC-Greensboro.