Tech Has Shot At Bid to NIT

After losing to Marquette Saturday night and ending its regular season with an 18-9 record, the Virginia Tech basketball team had little hopes of getting a bid to the National Invitation Tournament (NIT).

But the Hokies aren't dead. "Virginia Tech is definitely in the picture," said Pete Carlisimo, chairman of the NIT's selection committee.

Not only is there a chance the Gobblers might get a bid, there is a chance one of the first-round games will be played in Virginia—maybe Richmond, Norfolk or even Roanoke.

"If a team from that area is involved, we are aware of the three arenas and might well have a playoff in that area," said Carlisimo, who is understandably afraid of committing himself.

With VMI winning the Southern Conference, there will be just two teams from the state which would be considered by the NIT. Old Dominion is competing in the ECAC playoffs and might also land an NCAA spot.

Tech would then have an excellent shot at the NIT and Roanoke would have a good chance at a home game in the first round, which happens to be next Tuesday.

"Whenever there is a neutral floor near enough, we would prefer a neutral site," Carlisimo said. "We'd go to a team's home floor if we had no other choice."

Tech has a good chance for a game in this area because Alabama will probably be another southern team in the tournament. Tech has played Alabama this season so the two teams wouldn't be paired against each other in the first round.

An important fact for the Gobblers will be who gets the two NCAA bids from the ACC. If North Carolina and Maryland get them, then Wake Forest would be invited to the NIT and again the Gobblers have played Wake during the regular season. If Wake should do well in the ACC, the whole setup would change.

Bids for the NIT will go out Sunday. Also at that time, sites for the eight first-round games will be announced. Those eight winners will be going on to New York for the rest of the tournament.

Apparently much of Tech's fate lies with Chuck Noe, former coach of the Gobblers and more recently VCU's coach. Noe was in Roanoke Tuesday to watch the Southern Conference Tournament.

"Chuck's an old friend of mine. He's just looking around," said Carlisimo.

So while the Tech coaches are all out recruiting for next year, they might have to hurry back and finish this year. But then again, they might not.

--DENNIS LATTA