Monarchs, Gobblers Accept NIT Berths

ODU Hosts Villanova, VPI Home To Hoyas In Wednesday Rounds

By BOB MOSKOWITZ
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Old Dominion University, with the second best record in the 16-team field, and Virginia Tech, saddled with the second-best regular-season credentials, Sunday accepted invitations to participate in the National Invitation Tournament.

The Monarchs, still reeling from their first experience with a nationally ranked NCAA Division I competitor, will put their 25-3 ledger against Villanova Wednesday night at 8 in Norfolk Scope. Tech will play Georgetown the same night in Blacksburg.

ODU had its 22-game winning streak snapped by Syracuse before 10,258 as freshman Roosevelt Boule dropped in two free throws with five seconds left to lock up a 67-64 conquest for the 19th-ranked Orange.

The triumph sends Syracuse into the NCAA tourney for the fifth successive year. The Orange will be one of three ECAC teams in the 32-team field and meets the Southeaster Conference champion next Sunday at Baton Rouge, La., at 3:45 p.m.

The bid to 1973 NIT champion Tech admittedly surprised first-year Gobbler Coach Charlie Moir, who was a Tech assistant when the club first participated in the postseason classic in 1967.

The Gobbler take an 18-9 ledger against Georgetown’s 18-6 credentials. Oregon, which faces Oral Roberts (21-6), also is 18-9.

The Gobbler have not played since Feb. 26, when they lost six visiting Marquette 75-70. However, it was their third straight impressive showing — following victories over Wake Forest (99-97) and Virginia (71-61).

Despite what will be a 10-day layoff, Moir feels “we’ll have enough practice time to regain our sharpness.”

However, late Sunday, the Gobblers were still spread throughout the East Coast and Paul Webb, the nation’s leading free throw shooter, remained unlocated in the vicinity of Deland, Fla. He was expected for a 3 p.m. practice today.

The students are on a semester break but are due to return to classes Wednesday, which makes Moir optimistic again. This time he feels the contest will attract a sellout crowd of slightly over 10,000, something the Gobblers have enjoyed only twice this season.

The NIT field nearly included the University of Maryland. The Terps of the Atlantic Coast Conference apparently insisted on playing their first-round game at home and wound up turning down a contest with ODU in Scope.

The Monarchs of second-year Coach Paul Webb can’t expect to play with more intensity than they did against the Orange.

What they need is marksmanship similar to that which knocked Georgetown out of the ECAC picture last Wednesday 80-58.

Saturday, they dropped in only 31.5 per cent of their second-half shots. Some of that poor marksmanship can be credited to the intense Syracuse defense.

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Terps Turn Down NIT Opportunity

Larry Bird, a third team All-America, had a 26-2 record. The Sycamores meet Houston, the Southwest Conference runnerup with a 26-7 record, at Houston Wednesday.

Anthony Roberts, the top scorer on a free-shooting team, led Oral Roberts to a 21-6 record. Oral Roberts will meet Pacific-8 Conference runnerup Oregon at Tulsa Wednesday.

In another contest between independents with impressive records, Illinois State, 21-6, meets Creighton, also 21-6, at Omaha Tuesday.

The winners advance to the quarterfinals in New York’s Madison Square Garden March 14-15.

Old Dominion’s most serious problem thankfully didn’t materialize. Brilliant senior rebounder Wilson Washington came perilously close to damaging his knee with about four minutes left Saturday night.

He finished playing and Sunday reports were that he’ll be in top shape for the Wildcats, whose last appearance was in Saturday’s 77-74 loss to Duquesne in the ECBL championship joust.

Washington’s mishap came just when the Monarchs were experiencing their most devastating doldrums of the year.

Washington’s mishap wasn’t serious enough to keep him from being voted Most Outstanding Player in the tournament, which included the Syracuse game with St. Bonaventure and the ODU-Georgetown matchup.

Washington, now with 998 career rebounds, is far away and the most prolific three-year ODU rebounder in history.

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With or without the victory, the Monarchs did get a record-setting job of scoring from freshman while Ronnie Valentine.

By scoring 36 against Georgetown’s Hoyas and 20 against the Orange, the 6-foot-7 product of Norfolk erased nine marks previously held by George Washington’s Pat Tallent set in last year’s ECAC action.

Webb, like virtually everyone else connected with ODU, was quick to call Syracuse “easily the best team we’ve played all year.” As for Villanova (18-8), Webb claims little knowledge.

As for Saturday’s loss “they played their game more than we did.

The NIT field is the first of its kind. It is the first time there have been eight first-round games played in eight different sites around the nation.

On a national basis, the initial action is highlighted by a contest between 12th-ranked Alabama (22-4) and Memphis State (20-8).

Alabama and Memphis State each would have received strong consideration to participate in the NCAA championship series, but NCAA rules specify only two teams from a conference can be in the tournament. Tennessee and Kentucky beat Alabama for the Southeastern Conference berths and the Metro-7 berths went to Cincinnati and Louisville.

The NIT, which has been lucky to get one team rated in the top 20 the past few years, also landed No. 16 Indiana State, No. 18 Houston and No. 19 Oral Roberts.

Indiana State, led by sophomore

Staff Photo by Herb Barten

Record-Tying Home Crowd of 10,258 Paid Way In To Norfolk Scope For ECAC Regional Tilt