NEW YORK — Virginia Tech Coach Charlie Moir sat in the steamy dressing room long after the last player had left.

As always, Moir showed little emotion in spite of a tough 79-72 defeat to Alabama in the quarterfinal round of the National Invitation Tournament.

Moir now looks to recruiting for next year. This might be the toughest part of the game since he returned a year ago this week to Tech as the head basketball coach.

Last year wasn’t really a fair one by what to judge Moir in the game of recruiting. He took what he could get and didn’t do badly with Wayne Robinson, Les Hanson, Chris Scott and junior college guard Ben Pell, who scored 15 points against ‘Bama.

This year the stakes are bigger, though. It can’t just be an average year in recruiting.

“We’re competing with some biggies. ‘We’re shooting high,’ said Moir, who always did that even when he was at Roanoke College.

I remember when Moir, as Roanoke College coach, lost a player by the name of Neal Chenault to Duke. Moir was crushed because he thought Chenault was a super. He never played at Duke, but at Roanoke College, who knows what he might have done at Roanoke?

“We feel we must go with the best to compete with the people on our schedule,” Moir continued, as he laughed about the incident.

“You can’t get second-raters to play with the people on our schedule.”

But in the last few weeks, Tech’s recruiting picture has changed drastically.

First, and most disappointing, is the apparent loss of any chance at 7-footer Craig Watts from New England.

“He won’t even visit us,” said Moir.

“He’s chosen six schools that he apparently wants to visit and has been to two of them.”

Ratiff waverings

Moir was once as confident of signing James Ratiff of D.C. as anyone he had ever gone after. Ratiff is considered a super player, maybe one of the nation’s five best prospects.

Signing day came and went Saturday — no Ratiff.

Now Tech is in a dogfight. It was up against odds to get the 6-8 power forward anyway. Washington writers didn’t take Tech’s bid seriously to pull Ratiff away from the clutches of super powers.

Moir admits that Tennessee and Maryland has edged into the picture strongly.

“T’m just sure of one thing—that he won’t go very far away from home,” explained Moir. “I’m still optimistic about our chances. But I won’t be confident of getting him until he signs a national letter of intent. It’s a struggle.”

Even the one guard, Dexter Reid, already signed isn’t assured for Tech. Old Dominion and Virginia Commonwealth are still recruiting him, though Tech certainly has a big edge since Reid did sign a grant-in-aid. But until the national letter is signed April 15, Reid is still fair game.

This brings up some of the other players Tech is after. Most of them are big men

since Moir is counting on Reid to stick by his first decision and join returning guards Bell and Marshall Ashford.

Moir wants 6-8 John Hillenbrand, an upstate New York junior college player with three years left. He’s fighting Princeton and Georgia Tech for Hillenbrand, who wants engineering.

Tech has a good chance to land 6-8 George DeVone from North Carolina. Moir says DeVone will probably make up his mind in 10 days among Tech, Clemson and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

From Virginia, Tech is fighting Old Dominion and Wake Forest over 6-4 Arthur Jones of Hampton. Jones also isn’t scheduled to visit, though Moir feels this will be no problem.

The scrap over Boo Williams from Phoebus, a 6-7 player, is with Davidson, Duke and Wake Forest. From Georgetown Prep, 6-6 David Mulquin is deciding between Williams and Mary and Tech. Moir believes Mulquin is a very good player.

The Tech coach also is striving into New Jersey where 6-6 Alex Bradley has a wide range of choices between the Golddiggers, Rutgers and UNC-C.

Whatever, Ratiff remains the key. If he opts for Tennessee, as some feel he might, Tech will have to try and come up with numbers who can develop. And just what will that do to next season?

Foggin optimistic

Sam Foggin, Tech’s 6-9 backup junior center, believes Tech will have a good season next year in spite of losing its entire front line.

“Wayne and Les are back,” he said about the two freshmen who gained valuable experience and showed tremendous potential at times.

“Tic (Price, 6-5 transfer) is also coming in. I believe we’ll have a good recruiting year.”

Of course there were doubts coming into this year.

“A lot of people,” said Foggin, “wondered if we could make .500 this season. I think the way this team finished shows it’s one of the future. There are a lot of young people coming back.”

Other than front-liners Ernest Wansley, Phil Thieneman and Duke Thorpe, everybody else returns for Tech.

And Foggin is confident he can do the job next year if Moir is unable to recruit a freshman center like Ratiff, who can step in immediately.

“Coach Moir gave me a chance to gain confidence. I’ll be about the same weight and a little stronger on top next year,” Foggin predicted.

Moir nodded. “The job’s his until someone beats him out or he dogs it. But I’ve never given up on him.”

Still, Moir would like to recruit some people who are capable of beating out Foggin. It would be a sign of success.