Ex-Warrior Fornash Hasn’t Lost Touch

By BILL DEEKENS

Gene Fornash hasn’t lost his stride in the transition from high school to bigtime college — just a few points.

As a schoolboy at Henrico High, smooth-handed Gene had few peers as a high scoring guard.

He led the state in scoring with a 28-point average, setting a school record of 555 points in the process.

He led his team in assists and made every honor team around.

At that he may be better in baseball than basketball, Virginia Tech won the race to his doorstep.

Right now, Fornash is making the big adjustment to the college ranks and an average that hovers around 18 suggests he’s doing fine.

“There’s a big difference,” said Gene the other day. “Here they really stress defense. It’s all man-for-man while at Henrico we used the zone occasionally. You really have to be in shape here.”

Fornash is one of several on the freshman team who figure to help the varsity next year.

Tech will lose a lot to graduation (Bill McNeer, Charley Lipscomb, Darwin Pippin, Tom Trice) but the big man, Allan Bristow will be back.

This fact makes Fornash work even harder to become a topnotch collegian.

As a sophomore at Henrico, Fornash played on the same team with Bristow. The Warriors had a 14-6 record.

As a shortstop in baseball he’s just right.

“T’d just like to match him in the way he’s improved.

“Why I remember seeing him when he first played at Henrico ... He was sorta clumsy ... playing behind 10 or 12 players.

“Now he’s got the softest touch in the state ... he works at it so hard — a fine example.”

Fornash hopes to finish out his collegiate basketball career — then could well turn to the greener pastures of baseball.

As today guards go, Fornash at 6-2 is not very tall or at 175 very brawny.

“I love both sports,” says Fornash. “but in the long run my physical attributes lean toward baseball.

“I wasn’t considered small in basketball at Henrico. But up here everybody is big and strong — especially at the varsity level.”

Fornash has impressive baseball credentials.

His arm carries a “great” label. His overall fielding rated with the best around.

And as a hitter, Fornash was in the .400 area his senior year and later soared high in American Legion ball.

Eventually he’d like to become a pro.

“But not until my college days are over,” he says.