New Tech vs. Undermanned VMI

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If quantity counts, Virginia Tech should open its season by routing VMI in Lexington tonight.

The Gobblers will take an 18-man squad up to play the Keydets. But VMI will have only nine players on its bench tonight. The Keydets have only 11 on the team and two are out with injuries.

“We have only three guards and six men on the front line. That’s not many players,” said a concerned VMI Coach Bill Blair.

“You can only play five at a time,” said Tech Coach Don DeVoe. “Having people sitting on the bench doesn’t help you.”

Where VMI has four starters back from last year, the Gobblers are a big question mark, even to DeVoe. “This is a completely new edition. I really don’t know how they will react in a game condition. We don’t have a proven leader.”

Tech has talent on its team, but getting the most out of it is DeVoe’s problem. “We probably have as much talent as the year we won the NIT, but we need that leader like Bristow (Alan) was. We’re actually more concerned about our own team than we are theirs in the first game.

“I think this game will give us a good chance to get a true reading on our players,” DeVoe continued. “Playing at Lexington in VMI’s gym is a challenge. This is a very intense rivalry. There will be scouts there from a lot of schools on our schedule, but we don’t plan to hide anything.

“VMI has had a chance to scrimmage someone. We’ve only been competing against each other. We haven’t had an outside scrimmage. We’re ready to play. I wouldn’t want any more practice sessions,” DeVoe pointed.

For Blair, the opening game isn’t as important. “This isn’t any more important to us than any other game,” Blair said.

“Actually, it isn’t as important as a conference game. The Southern Conference is our goal this year like it always has been.”

After Tech, the Keydets go on the road for conference games at Appalachian State and East Carolina. “We’re going right to the top early. It will be good for us to play some tough games to start the season.”

The Keydets might be up to a 12-man team in time for their next game. Drew Stone, VMI’s tallest player at 6-8, a freshman, is sidelined with an ankle injury and Dave Slomski has a knee injury.

Also, freshman Johnny Garnett is expected to join the squad. Garnett was a defensive back for the football team and had not been home since August so he won’t be in Lexington for the opening game.

Garnett, 5-9, is expected to be a backup guard for the Keydets.