Tech Has Rare Trip To Lexington Tonight

It has been nearly a dozen years since Virginia Tech last played a basketball game at the VMI Fieldhouse. The Hokies will open the season there tonight, and fortunately bad memories are long since forgotten.

That night of Feb. 1, 1963, was a black mark in the normally good relationship between the two institutions.

During the pre-game warmups, the Tech players were being harassed by the VMI cheerleaders. It may have all been in the interest of clean fun and college spirit, but unfortunately one cheerleader and one Tech player took it too far.

While the Gobblers were shooting layups before the game, one of the cheerleaders decided to run between the Tech line. Frankie Alvis, a Tech guard, took offense to the maneuver and slugged the VMI student.

Naturally, the student body became aroused and a bad scene was threatened. But calmer heads prevailed and the game took place without further incident, although Alvis was naturally booed throughout. Tech won, 77-66, and has not played at VMI since.

The Gobblers used the fracas as a stepping stone to breaking off the basketball series between the two schools. To be honest, Tech's basketball program was geared at a far higher tempo than VMI's, and the Gobblers had no interest in playing any more games in the Fieldhouse.

The two teams did not play again until four years ago, when the Keydets shocked Tech in the Big Five tournament in Roanoke. Last year the Hokies won in Blacksburg, and now they will play again in Lexington.

No Real Comparison

Although VMI has scored two straight upset wins over Tech in football, there is no comparison between the two basketball programs. VMI has gone no place in recent years, while just two years back Tech won the NIT.

VMI is expecting a much better year, and with 15 home games, could well get that elusive winning year. Tech is an unknown quantity with several junior college players, but the Hokies will be favored tonight. Whatever happens, they will just stick to basketball.

Jimmy the Greek was among those bemoaning Tech's 22-21 loss to West Virginia in the football finale. The Greek had a different reason, however, "If they (Tech) had just made that last field goal, we would have hit it on the nose," said the Las Vegas odds maker. The Greek had picked the Hokies by two points.

The Greek was a visitor at Tech last week. He said that he enjoyed his visit to "Virginia Poly." Oh, well, Jimmy can't be expected to keep up on everything.