Gators to offer Tech tough test

By BOB McELLAND
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LEXINGTON — Terry Truax, basketball assistant at Florida and former Florida Tech, in action here Saturday night and quickly admitted he was impressed.

"They are quick and they have good depth," Truax said. "But the most important thing is they seem to rely on each other much more than last year."

That last statement might well be the reason for any success the young Gobblers enjoy this season in basketball. It was just another way of saying the Gobblers like each other. This togetherness could offset any physical shortcomings the team might have.

But most of Tech's future opponents boast much more experience and talent than VMI which felt the sting of the Gobblers' quickness and shooting when these two met on Saturday to the tune of 96-64.

Tech will face a much more serious encounter tonight in Florida when they go against the Gobblers in hopes of opening their season with the benefit of Truax's scouting report.

Top man for the Gators will be 6-4 Chip Williams, an all SEC selection last season.

Meanwhile, VMI will be trying to regroup and do something to cut down on its turnovers before going to Appalachian State Thursday night.

Although many might have considered it a mismatch, the game here Saturday night brought many singing the praises of Tech. The Gobblers aren't a big, physical ball club and that might be where they will be most seriously tested.

But Coach Don DeVoe and his staff have accustomed at least 10 or 12 young men who know what to do with the basketball and how to do it together.

There are only two seniors listed on the scholarship squad of 16 and neither figures in the Tech playing line-up. DeVoe does have a trio of junior-college stars and a solid core of his own recruits who are non-scholarship men and juniors with a freshman or two thrown in.

The two most impressive junior college players were Raymond Travis from Lexington and Larry Cooke from Newberry College. Cooke is listed at 6-3 by weighing in with 29 points while Cooke (6-4) added 10. Each pulled rebounds reioach.

The top returnee is junior Dave Sennbaugh, a tough 6-4 junior who looks like most a most court game for any player. Then there are Kyle McKee and 6-3 Mike Collins, two other impressive juniors who seem to have matured.

Last year's team sent a delegation of Dale Thorpe, who was a starter last year as a freshman but has been bumped from the starting unit this season. This is just another example of the Tech depth.

Coach Bill Blair of VMI was left shaking his head. He didn't know if the score was indicative of Tech's strength or of the Gobblers' weakness. "I sure hope we aren't as bad as we looked tonight," Blair said.

"We simply lost the ball too many times," guard Curt Hoppe said. "It was 13 times. Tech is quick and they all jump well. They are going to be tough after they play some games."

I don't know about us, but we think we have the talent and some potential, but we sure didn't show it tonight."

One of the more encouraging things for VMI was the play of Ron Carter, a 6-4 junior from Pittsburgh who can jump and might be the one to make things happen for the Gobblers.

Sennbaugh, who like McKee was a top reserve as a freshman on Tech's 1972 NIT championship team, is encouraged. But he isn't going overboard predicting any great things.

"It's a lot of fun playing with these guys," Sennbaugh said. "We all want to play and our depth will keep everyone hunting, but there is nothing but good feelings among this team."

The game at Florida will be important. And so will those two games in the Vanderbilt tournament. One thing sure, next week will be a real test of how much kind of team we really have.

After tonight's game, Tech will return home for two days of practice and then it's off to Nashville for the Vanderbilt tournament. Tech will meet Virginia in the final opening round game Friday night while Illinois plays Florida State Friday evening.

The winners play for the title Saturday afternoon and the losers meet for consolation honors.