Unbeaten Tech Faces Vanderbilt

Virginia Tech's basketball team continues its heavy road schedule tonight with the toughest test yet.

The 2-0 Hokies open play in the Vanderbilt Invitational against the host school. Usually that means the home team is trying to find the easiest way to the finals, but Tech is certainly no easy touch.

The Gobblers blitzed VMI in their opener, 96-64, and then stunned Florida, 86-85, on Larry Cooke's rebound basket with two seconds left. Florida did not lose a game at home last year.

The Commodores are the defending Southeastern Conference co-champs (they played in the NCAA) and already have beaten a good St. John's team by 20 points, 73-53.

All four of the teams in the Vandy tourney are unbeaten. In the opening game, Southern Illinois will play Austin Peay. Southern Illinois is led by 6-11 Joe Meriweather, who may be one of the best big men in the nation. Peay no longer has Fly Williams, who is now with the Spirits of St. Louis, but it still plays a run-and-gun game, having beaten South Alabama 94-92 this week.

The Tech-Vandy game is the nightcap and will start at 10 p.m. Roanoke time. The first round losers will play at 8 Saturday night, with the championship game to follow. Favored Vandy has won its own tourney all but two times.

In other action tonight, Norfolk State plays at Southwest Missouri State, UNC-Greensboro is at Christopher Newport, Greensboro is at Virginia Wesleyan, Lynchburg plays at N.C. Methodist and D.C. Teachers is at Eastern Mennonite.

First round games will be played in the Madison and Randolph-Macon Invitational tourneys.