Hokies, UVa. battle

Pivotal game at Tech

By BOB McLELLAND
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BLACKSBURG — Coach Don DeVoe of Virginia Tech doesn’t like to put special emphasis on any individual game. But he will admit the Gobblers’ outing here tonight at 8 against archrival Virginia is a “very pivotal game for us.”

Coach Terry Holland of Virginia thinks the same is true for his young Cavaliers.

It all should add up to an exciting encounter that will see the winner take a giant step toward shaking its recent losing ways and gain the confidence that could pave the way for a successful season.

Both enter the game with three losses in the last four game. Tech stands 7-5, a record that is especially disappointing. The Gobblers opened the season with unexpected success only, in DeVoe’s words, to suffer a bit of backsliding and to lose the desire to take it to the opponents in recent games.

Virginia has been playing away from home so long Holland would like to take some recorded crowd noise from a Cavalier home game to play to his kids at game time.

“You don’t know what it’s like to keep playing away where no one is cheering for you,” Holland said. “This is especially true of a young team like ours. I can see how it would get to the kids.”

DeVoe looks for Holland to mix up the Virginia defenses and to try to catch the offensive signals when they are called by the Tech guards.

“They have scouted us so much they probably know our offense as well as we do,” DeVoe said. “We’ll have to junk the verbal calls and try to get into our offense by doing what comes naturally.”

The game will offer the teams a chance to play against their physical equal more than either has in recent games. Neither team has an awesome front line.

One of the puzzles in the Virginia camp has been the relative lack of scoring from junior Wally Walker, who was a star the past two years.

“I don’t think there is anything really wrong with Wally,” Holland said. “Maybe he’s trying too hard. He might be taking too much of a load on himself. But the big reason is the other teams are ganging up on him. It’s not like his first two years when he had a lot of other kids taking the pressure off him. We don’t have any Gus Gerards or Barry Parkhills around.”

Sophomore Mark Newlen of Staunton missed the loss at Wake Forest Wednesday night with a sprained ankle. His play as an alternate at guard tonight is doubtful.

The brightest note at Virginia has been the play of Marc Iavarone, a 6-8 freshman center. “He’s been super,” said Holland. “I couldn’t ask any more out of a freshman.”

DeVoe agrees, saying he is concerned about the play of the lanky lad from Old Bethpage, N.Y. “He’s tough inside,” said DeVoe. “But I think they have a lot of good kids. I don’t care what Walker has been doing, he’s still a great one. And I think their guards (sophomore Billy Langlosh and freshmen Dave Koesters) can play for any team in the ACC with the proper help up front.”

“Virginia has a group of smart kids. Kids with a lot of pride, I know they’ll come up here all ready to go after us.”

DeVoe and Holland both realize there are other factors that make the game important. They cite the effect on recruiting in the state as a major one.

“I don’t think you can have a lot of personal pride in any athletic program unless it is state-oriented,” said DeVoe. “There are a lot of top prospects in the state this year and this game could help one of us land the best ones.”

Holland feels Tech has great team quickness. This along with junior college stars and the fact the Gobblers have played four more games than the Cavaliers will be to Tech’s advantage.

“And don’t forget they are playing at home,” Holland quickly added. “Anyone will tell you this is one of the toughest places around to play.”

But Tech hasn’t been enjoying great home success in recent games. The Gobblers beat a weak Vermont team but lost to both Alabama and South Carolina in their last three home encounters.

“But we aren’t Alabama or South Carolina,” Holland quickly reminds. “Maybe we’ll have to play like one to win.”

The game is another sellout but may be seen on Channel 7 or heard on WFIR and WJLM-FM radio.