Thorpe goes home, shows fans, Spiders

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RICHMOND — Virginia Tech and Duke Thorpe both made decisions that left the University of Richmond a bit unhappy.

First, Thorpe decided to turn down Richmond offers two years ago and accept a basketball grant-in-aid with the Gobblers instead.

Second, Tech Coach Don DeVoe picked Thorpe’s value to the team by leaving him in the game here Saturday night after the West Point native picked up his fourth personal.

Thorpe played the last seven and one-half minutes as if he were on glass. But, he was rebounding, holding off Richmond high scorer Bob McCurdy and scoring six points to lead Tech’s 83-77 romp over Richmond.

“When Duke got his fourth foul,” said DeVoe, “we had to make a decision whether to play him. He made some big plays down the stretch for us.”

Thorpe, a 6-4 sophomore forward who is developing rapidly, said he wasn’t worried about his personal fouls. “I knew we had guys on the bench who could come in and play,” Thorpe remarked.

As for recruiting, Thorpe recalls when former Richmond Coach Lewis Mills tried to entice him to become a Spider.

“They really recruited me pretty heavily,” said Thorpe. “They had a good program, but I liked Tech’s better. They had the schedule I wanted to play.”

Thorpe confesses that Richmond was among the final four schools in its bid for his services. He wanted to stay in the state close to his relatives so they could see him play. They were here Saturday night since it is only 45 miles from West Point and they’ll be in Williamsburg tomorrow night when the Gobblers take on William and Mary.

“We were psyched (as a team) because Richmond has beaten us here the last two years,” Thorpe admitted. “But I don’t get up for that. I had to do well in front of my home folks. I’m too close to home to have a bad game.”

Thorpe wound up with 22 points—tops among the Gobblers. Tech had three other players to hit double figures: Dave Sensibaugh, Larry Cooke and Mark Cartwright. The three each hit 14.

All took a back seat to McCurdy, who fired in 33 points. But the 6-7 senior, with Thorpe watching him, got only 12 points after the half. “We had a guard help out in the second half,” said the modest Thorpe. “We didn’t do that in the first half.”

Cartwright’s explosion, which included some deft shooting from the outside limits, complemented Sensibaugh. In the first half Sensibaugh was six sizzling when he got all his points. He was penetrating Richmond’s defense well.

In the second half Cartwright scored 10 of his points and became the outside threat to keep Tech in control of what was not a particularly outstanding game.

“I haven’t played a whole lot in the last two and one-half weeks,” said Cartwright, who has been sick. “So I wasn’t as relaxed as I usually am. But I shot well all week in practice.”

For the game Cartwright hit six of eight. If he had been relaxed, he might have notched them all.

In spite of the easy win, DeVoe is concerned. Tech still isn’t the smooth piece of machinery that it was in early December when it rolled over VMI.

“I’m quite worried about our dry spell,” said DeVoe after Tech failed to polish off Richmond easily when getting some big leads. “We didn’t do the job on the boards (rebounds were even at 33 for each team) I thought we would, and I felt this was a game we had a big advantage on them.”

But DeVoe did see some good in the win. “This,” he said, “was the first of four really big road games. The thing is that we came into the locker room happy from the first one. But now we have to go right back and play another team that wants to beat us badly.”