Gobblers seeking 8-for-9 February

By JACK BOGACZYK
Sports Writer

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.—Basketball coaches are notorious for their constant claims of “playing them one at a time.”

But Virginia Tech’s Don DeVoe really means it.

The Gobblers, who can’t afford to look ahead, battle Wake Forest here tonight at 8. The contest is the first of a two-game road trip for Tech, which journeys to Richmond, Ky., for a Monday night date at Eastern Kentucky.

“Right now our biggest concern is to regroup and shoot for a winning season,” said DeVoe as the Gobblers bring an 11-6 record against the Demon Deacons. “We can’t afford to worry about getting a post-season tournament bid now. It’s just a case of being able to get the kids back into a winning frame of mind.”

Wake brings a 9-8 record into tonight’s game, but the Deacons are 5-2 at home and always give the Gobblers problems. And there might be more bad news for Tech as leading scorers Russell Davis and Larry Cooke have not practiced since the Tuesday loss at William and Mary.

Cooke, scoring at a 14.5-point clip, has a foot injury and Davis, the Hokies’ top scorer with a 19.8 mark, is suffering from knee problems. DeVoe indicated that should the pair be unable to go at tipoff time, Mark Cartwright and Mike Collins will join Duke Thorpe, Dave Sensibaugh and Kyle McKee as the starters.

Wake Forest has allowed over 100 points in each of its last three starts, and DeVoe hopes to exploit the Deacons’ lackadaisical defense. At the same time the dark-haired Tech coach admits the Gobblers will have defensive problems of their own trying to contain Wake guard Skip Brown. DeVoe calls Brown “the best guard in the Atlantic Coast Conference.” Many would second his thoughts.

Tech, which carried solid hopes of a tournament bid after going 7-3 in December, now must play their best month of the season after a disappointing January.

“We have to win eight of our remaining games to be considered for a tournament berth,” said DeVoe. “We have nine left. I think we could lose one and still make it.”

DeVoe is right. But the Gobblers must also play DePaul and North Carolina at home besides Oklahoma City and Oral Roberts on the road. Tech will also entertain Richmond, W&M and West Virginia this month.

A tough 28 days to be sure.