Troubled Gobblers Must Beat Eastern

By BILL BRILL
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RICHMOND, Ky. — Every athletic team arrives at the crossroads to a season at some time or another, for some reason or another.

The moment of truth arrives tonight for Virginia Tech's basketball team.

If Tech harbors any aspirations of being one of 56 major college teams which will participate in post-season action, the Hokies must beat Eastern Kentucky. Then they must come back home and beat DePaul on Wednesday.

Ever the realist, Tech Coach Don DeVoe admits as much. "If we can get through the year with no more than two or three losses," he said, "I think we deserve some consideration. If we don't...well, then we don't deserve anything."

The most educated guess is that Tech needs to keep its loss total into single figures, namely nine. After losing to Wake Forest Saturday, 90-72, Tech is now 11-7.

The Hokies have eight games remaining, three on the road. They must win at least four of the five home games and two of three on the road. Beating Eastern Kentucky should be an easier task than taking DePaul or North Carolina in Blacksburg and Oral Roberts or Oklahoma City on the road.

DeVoe professes to know little about Eastern. He was surprised to discover that the Colonels of second-year Coach Bob Mulcahy had a starting lineup composed of three freshmen and two juniors.

As is the case with most young teams, Eastern has had its troubles away from home. The Colonels are 7-2 at home, 0-8 in enemy territory.

"They really can't have much of a team," admitted DeVoe. "We beat them by 27 last year in Blacksburg. But this is another road game." DeVoe knows the perils of excessive travel. The Hokies lost two on the road last week.

There is a good chance that Tech will open with freshman Sam Foggin in the pivot. It has become increasingly evident in recent games that Tech needs some muscle underneath.

Unless Tech recruits a junior college center—the Hokies are looking at a pair of 6-11 players—Foggin is the post man of the future.

"He's over 6-9 now and strong," said DeVoe of the freshman from Parkersburg, W.Va. "Sam had the great game against Virginia, then he got hurt after the West Virginia game and he's just now getting back into shape."

This would be a good opportunity to take a look at Foggin, since Eastern's center is a 6-9 freshman. Bill Dwayne, with a 5-point scoring average.

The loss to Wake Forest confirmed Tech's inside troubles. The Hokies simply do not do much damage inside against good teams. DeVoe admits as much.

"We just don't pass the ball inside very well. You just can't expect to keep beating teams with perimeter shooting."

With the exception of Foggin, however, all of the rest of Tech's inside players are basically forwards, and none of them is a muscle man. The present center, Kyle McKee, is much more effective as a forward. Duke Thorpe can play center offensively, but he's only 6-6 and at a disadvantage on defense and on the boards.

Tech outrebounded Wake, 44-41, but those figures are deceiving. The Deacons, not basically an inside team, got a lot of easy baskets. Tech got off 10 more shots and had three less baskets.

One problem was that point guard Dave Sensibaugh and his replacement, freshman George Aguilar, did not score from the floor, going 0-6 and 0-2 respec-
tively. "That," said DeVoe, "is what I mean."

Eastern could be a team that Tech should enjoy playing. The Colonels are members of the Ohio Valley Conference, which at one time was a very strong basketball league. Right now, however, the OVC is down. The only OVC team with a good record is Middle Tennessee, 15-2, and led by freshman Claude (Sleepy) Taylor of Madison-Mayodan, N.C., a player that Tech recruited hard.

DeVoe knows exactly what has happened to the OVC, or why basketball powers like Eastern and Western Kentucky are now no better than your average Southern Conference club.

"The OVC has been hurt by the Southeastern Conference," said DeVoe. "They used to get in the great black athletes in the south. Now those players are going to Alabama and Auburn and even Kentucky."

It is a simple matter of prestige, and the crop in the OVC's caliber of play is matched in another nearby conference, the Mid-American. The Mid-American suffers from the rebirth of basketball in the Big Ten, and again the loss of the great black player to the more prestigious conference.

So Tech has arrived in Richmond—Kentucky, not Virginia.