'Duuuke' Disappointed

By DENNIS LATTA
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For the last time this season, cries of “Duuuke, Duuuke” will be heard in the Virginia Tech Coliseum tonight.

The Gobblers are playing their last game of the season and it will be another eight months before the Tech fans will see their favorite, Duke Thorpe, play again.

Thorpe was one of the few players returning to Tech this season. As a freshman last year, Thorpe won a group of followers that has swelled into a large part of the student section at Tech games.

“I’ve never known anybody who can get fans excited like Duke has,” said Gobbler Coach Don DeVoe. “Everyone can tell he is giving his best effort. He’s a super fellow and it shows when he is on the floor.”

For personality, Thorpe would be all-American. But the 6-6 sophomore from West Point would enjoy the games more if he felt he was playing as well as he could.

“The crowd is really great. It relaxes me. But I know I can play better than I did this year. We could have done better. I’m kind of disappointed, but all the guys will be back next year and we have a lot to look forward to.”

Thorpe was not a starter during the first month of the season, starting for the first time against West Virginia in Morgantown. Tonight, the Hokies end their season against West Virginia in Blacksburg.

“As long as I get to play, I don’t really care if I’m starting,” said Thorpe. “I get about as much playing time either way.”

As a freshman, Thorpe averaged 7.9 points a game. This year, his average is 9.2, which isn’t much of an increase.

“Here as of late, Duke hasn’t really scored that well and I really can’t explain why. But he has developed in many ways,” DeVoe pointed out. “He has shown great aggressiveness on defense. He has had some games where he has flat done the job on some good-scoring forwards. He can help us in so many ways.

“He did improve this year,” DeVoe continued. “He was scoring adequately, but then stopped. He will always be a good percentage shooter.”

According to Thorpe, “I’ve definitely learned a lot this year. I’ve learned to move away from the ball more and how to play better defense. I consider myself better on defense than offense.”

As a freshman, Duke finished with 138 rebounds. This season, he has been averaging seven a game with 175 for the year. “I’ve always felt Duke was an excellent rebounder,” DeVoe said.

Thorpe is one of the few players who won’t have trouble getting up for tonight’s game against the Mountaineers. With a 15-10 record, even if the Gobblers win they have almost no chance of getting a post season bid.

“It won’t be tough to get up. We want to win. Some of the guys don’t think we have a chance to go to a tournament and some think we do. I think we’ve got to be considered. We beat some good teams.”

“There’s no way we could get to post-season tournament, but I don’t think we had a bad year,” DeVoe said. “We have some things we have to prove.

This was a rebounding year for Tech. We want to go out as a winner in the last game. There are a heck of a lot of teams who would enjoy a year like we’ve had.”

Just one more win would have given the Gobblers a good chance at a tournament bid.

“It all boils down to inconsistency,” DeVoe pointed out. “We lost to some teams we should have beaten but we also beat some good teams that we should have lost to.

Tonight’s game will be rated a tossup. The Gobblers beat the 13-10 Mountaineers in overtime earlier. “We’ve beaten them three out of the last four times in Morgantown. We’ve won two out of three of those in overtime,” DeVoe explained.

“We’re very comparable the way the seasons have gone. They’ve been up and down just like we have. But West Virginia stands a good chance of getting into the NCAA tournament because it is in the ECAC (East Coast Athletic Conference). The ECAC playoff is at Morgantown and they’ll take two teams.”

In other games tonight, Clemson is at Maryland in an ACC showdown for first place, Appalachian is at Richmond, Virginia Wesleyan at VMI, William and Mary at Rutgers, Pitt-Johnstown at Madison, Philadelphia Textile at Old Dominion, and Fairleigh-Dickinson at Wake Forest.