Spring fling: form conference

Last week it was Richmond.
This week it might be South Florida.
Next year it might be St. Louis, Tulane, Georgia Tech or even South Carolina.

The new conference fever is hitting independent colleges throughout the South. Two former basketball coaches from this state are involved in the possible start of new conferences.

South Florida's Bill Gibson, ex-University of Virginia coach, feels he can put a six-team basketball league together by next year.

Tulane Coach Charlie Moir, formerly of Roanoke College, says his team is interested in joining another group that includes teams from the Midwest and South.

Richmond, which plans to turn independent in 1976, proposed a conference for all sports. The other ideas embrace just basketball.

But really, basketball is the main problem. This year the NCAA university division tournament included 27 conference-affiliated teams and only five independents.

The idea behind these new groups is to gain an automatic berth in the NCAA tournament for the championship team.

"The NCAA has forced me into it," said Gibson. "Unless you are Marquette or Notre Dame, you won't get any attention."

Gibson refuses to name teams. But he says he hopes to form the conference this summer. While member teams couldn't play each other in the coming year, they could have a tournament and qualify a champion for the NCAA.

Other sources, however, say that the main teams in Gibson's conference are South Florida, Jacksonville, Stetson and Florida State. The key to forming the conference is to induce South Carolina, Georgia Tech, Memphis State and Tulane to join.

Oddly, Moir says his athletic director, Dr. Rix Yard, is not in favor of this group. He also doubts that Georgia Tech and South Carolina will join.

Moir says the other group, which will hold a meeting this weekend in Atlanta, consists of Georgia Tech, Tulane, possibly South Carolina, Dayton, Memphis State, Cincinnati and St. Louis.

The natural question is whether either group has contacted Virginia Tech. They haven't.

It is safe to assume that Tech wouldn't be interested. The Hokies are holding themselves open for a possible invitation to join the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Bob Teitlebaum

But the day isn't very far in the past when Tech would have been willing to listen to a proposal like the one from Richmond, South Florida or any other group to join a new conference. In fact, five years ago Tech was trying to interest many of the same teams into forming a conference for all sports.

Moir, Gibson views

Moir doesn't feel the NCAA has turned its back on the independent just yet, as Gibson does.

"I'm not ready to panic after one year," said the Tulane coach. "Only five independents were invited, but I don't know of any other independents that deserved to be in the NCAA"

"Stetson and University of North Carolina Charlotte (both with over 20 wins) don't have the name. It's a matter of having a name for drawing people."

"I feel if we do reasonably well recordwise, we would get a bid to the NIT."

Moir, however, says his people, meaning Dr. Yard, would be interested in a basketball league with the right setup. Presumably if the meeting this weekend in Atlanta works out, then there will be a basketball conference formed of schools from South Carolina in the East to St. Louis in the West.

Gibson feels the tournament idea for his conference group is a good one because of his ties with the ACC. He says that with the ACC going to Landover, Md., he would even like to hold it in the Carolinas area. He refuses to say it would be South Carolina, but that seems to be the thinking. So the Gamecocks could be the pivotal school for either conference to get off the ground.

"We're going in the right direction," said Gibson. "But we want to get the teams we're after. I don't think there is any question that we'll have a conference. I think we'll have at least three teams that have been to the final four in the NCAA."

Gibson says he didn't approach Virginia Tech because of distance. Still, it's a long way from South Carolina to New Orleans or Memphis.

What does it all mean? Well, it could be the beginning of conferences for one sport only. It also could mark the end of independents as far as NCAA basketball is concerned. After all, it only takes six to form a conference according to Gibson. And that means at least a bid to the league championship.

This 'n that

Roanoke College's snub by the NCAA lacrosse tournament is further cheapened by Cortland State's championship. The Maroons beat Cortland in a scrimmage at Baltimore during spring break.

Brian Hoffman, official scorer for the Salem Pirates, says he brought a copy of Jerry Lucas' memory book. "Then," continued Hoffman, "I forgot to read it."

Salem Manager John Lipon asked on how he feels when having to tell a player his is released: "I really don't mind. Most of the time you're doing them a favor. Some of the time you're doing the game a favor."

John Candelaria wound up saving a game in relief for Charleston the other day in the International League. That's a new twist for the former Salem pitcher who figures to make Pittsburgh's club very soon. He's got a 6-0 record currently.

Tennessee quarterback Conredge Holloway turned down a baseball offer of from $90,000 to $100,000 by Montreal in order to play college football. That was four years ago. Now he's ready for the baseball draft again and a liberal estimate would be that he won't get a quarter of what he was offered four years ago. It means that he had better get a big offer for football, but that's not likely either. Conredge is still a good baseball player. But he's no longer super, showing that most kids can't make it in two sports in college or on a pro level.