Sports Club Honors Athletes

Hokies Sign Cage Prospect

By JERRY VERNON
Sports Writer

Like a quick swing of a pendulum, Virginia Tech basketball recruiting took an abrupt turn over the past week.

With a month to go before the April 13 national letter day, the Hokies have lost at least one prospect, probably two, and signed another.

According to Coach Charlie Moir, Massanutten Military Academy guard Dexter Reed has inked a full grant-in-aid with the Hokies.

"He signed with us last Tuesday," said Moir Monday after addressing the Blacksburg Sports Club. "I don't mean a waiver. He will definitely play basketball for Virginia Tech."

Reed, who starred in high school at Granby two years ago, was heavily recruited by Tech last season. However, the 6-4 cager decided to attend prep school for a year before studying at a major university.

While Reed laid the pen on Hokie contracts, two of the nation's hottest recruits appeared to have slipped past Tech.

James Ratliff, a 6-8 forward from Eastern High in Washington, D.C., told United Press International last week that he was "70 per cent" certain of attending Tennessee.

"That means to me he's not completely sure," said Moir, "so we're still in there digging."

The coach is less optimistic about his chances of signing 6-11 Craig Watts from North Easton, Mass.

"The only thing I can figure is that he's going to stay close to home," said Moir. "Watts says he wants to study engineering and he knows there's no better place (for studying) than at Virginia Tech. I've just about given up on him."

With the sudden changes in Tech recruiting, Moir is shifting emphasis to three other prospects. Within the next two weeks, he hopes to sign 6-8 George DeVone from Newton Grove, N.C., 6-9 John Hillebrand from Jamestown, N.Y. and 6-6 Alex Bradley, a Longbranch, N.J. product who fired in 38 points and pulled down 19 rebounds Saturday in leading his squad to the state Group AAA crown.

"I feel we have a good nucleus returning," warned the coach, "but we will need help on the inside."

The Hokies lose three players from this year's squad.

Seniors Duke Thorpe, Phil Thieman and Ernest Wansley composed the inside starting lineup which helped Tech to a National Invitational Tournament bid this season.

The three graduating Hokies, along with their teammates, and the Blacksburg High School basketball squad were honored at the noon luncheon in the Donaldson Brown Center on the Tech campus.

Thorpe and Thieman shared Player-of-the-Year honors from the sports club. Thorpe netted 1294 points and hit 60 per cent of his field goal attempts in his career. Thieman finished his stint as a Hokie with a school record 84.2 per cent career free throw average. He barely missed the national title this season with a 91.6 mark, but still set a school mark for a single year.

One prep cager who has signed in football and basketball with Tech, Blacksburg's Sidney Snell, was named the Indians' Most Outstanding Player. The 6-1 guard-forward led Blacksburg to a second place state finish in Group AA competition this year behind a 24 point scoring average. Snell pumped in more than 1900 points for the Tribe during his four year career.

The luncheon's keynote speaker, Tech President William Lavery, described the performance of the prep and college cagers as "acting as gentlemen at all times."

"It would be difficult to imagine a more exciting year for basketball in Blacksburg than this one," he said.

The president also took the opportunity to expound upon the relationship of academics and athletics at Tech.

"I constantly get asked what are the balance of our athletics and academics," he said. "There is nothing different about them. Indeed, they're compatible as we work to improve both levels."