Tennessee Scoops Gobblers

By BILL BRILL
Sports Editor

The saga of James Ratiff, high school basketball star, ended unhappily for Virginia Tech Monday night.

Ratiff, the 6-8 scholastic all-American from Washington, D.C., signed the national letter of intent with Tennessee Coach Ray Mears.

Ratiff had originally signed a Southeastern Conference tender with the Vols, but reportedly had told Mears he was not going to Tennessee.

As late as last Friday, Ratiff appeared ready to sign with Tech Coach Charlie Moir. But, just as Moir thought he had Ratiff landed, Marquette’s new coach, Hank Raymonds, did an anti-Tech selling job on

the center-forward from Eastern High.

Allegedly, Raymonds told Ratiff that NCAA champion Marquette would be on national TV five times next season, and why did Ratiff want to play his college ball in Blacksburg?

Whatever happened, Ratiff did not sign with the Hokies, to whom he had committed on previous occasions. Now, Ratiff isn’t going to play with Marquette, either, but Tennessee.

Ratiff got off to a slow start this year, but wound up with a 24.3 average, third high in the Washington Metro area.

Richmond has signed Mark Reed, a 6-3 guard who has been called the best player in Cincinnati. Among others, the Spiders beat out UNC-Charlotte for Reed’s services.

Reed averaged 22.1 points and 14.1 rebounds while handing out an average of 7.8 assists for Anderson High. He shot 59 per cent from the field and 79 per cent from the foul line. Reed was first team all-Cincinnati, made all-state and was on the all-American team selected by Scholastic Magazine. He also was on the all-Ohio team picked by Basketball Weekly.

“We are extremely happy to sign Mark,” said Richmond Coach Carl Stone. “He is a Kevin Eastman-type player and our top big guard prospect.”

Wake Forest signed three players, including 6-10 Justin Ellis of St. John’s in D.C. The Deacons also got 6-3 point guard Fran McCaffery of Philadelphia and 6-2½ Ed Thurman from Lynn, Mass.