Tech Doing Well In Recruiting; Big Men Expected To Fill Slate

By Rick Stoss

It is almost two weeks into the recruiting sweeps takes and it appears the University of North Carolina is out in front of the pack once again. Carolina, which had the best recruiting year in the nation last year according to BASKETBALL WEEKLY, may have one equal to last year, proven by Mike O’Koren and Rich Yonaker. Already in the Tar Heel fold this year is 6-9 Pete Budko out of Loyola of Baltimore, rated one of the top big men in the country with Damell Valentine possibly the best guar in the nation and 6-6 Al Wood on the way.

If UNC is out in front Duke isn’t far behind. The Blue Devils have signed not one of the best players, but the top player in the land in 6-7 Gene Banks out of West Philadelphia. Add 6-7 Kenny Dinard and Indiana transfer Bob Bender, along with holdovers, center Mike Gminski and guard Jim Sparmarkel and that spells top twenty.

Wake Forest has signed three players, 6-10 Justin Ellis from St. John’s in D.C., 6-3 Fran McCafferty of Philadelphia and 6-2 Ed Thurman from Lynn, Mass.

Elsewhere around the ACC, Maryland has signed but one guard while Norm Sloan of N.C. State has had just about everybody transfer and has little coming in so far to take their place. Virginia has inked two, 6-3 Ken Hall and 6-5 Jeff Klein, with 6-5 Lee Rakes from Louisville verbally committed.

On the home front Virginia Tech should have two more signees by the time this article goes to print with a possible third at home making up his mind. Expected to sign with Tech are 6-6 forward Dave Bennett, a 180 pounder from Bloomington Hills Lasher H.S. near Detroit and John Hillenbrand, a 6-9, 225 pound center from Jamestown C.C. in New York.

Bennett, who is an excellent outside shot, averaged 20 points while taking an average 14 shots a game. The Michigan native chose Tech over Arkansas and Iowa State. As for Hillenbrand, he is very big and very strong and is a super student with a 4.0 in engineering. Hillenbrand is expected to fill the backup center role for the Hokies. The third and undecided is 6-6 Alex Bradley from New Jersey. Bradley is a high scorer who operates well from the corner and is as aggressive as they come. A dominating rebounder, the Long Branch High Star is considered to be one of the best in New Jersey. To gain Bradley’s services, Tech would have to be chosen over Rutgers, Villanova and Providence.

Tech has already signed two guards, Dexter Reid from Massanutten and Mark Shrader from Philadelphia. Reid, who is originally from Granby High in Norfolk, signed with Tech last year but needed to go to prep school for a year to improve his grades. Rated as one of the top ten players in Virginia, Reid is a penetrating guard who goes one on one very well. Shrader, who played his scholastic ball at Malvern Great Valley, is an excellent outside shot and like Reid penetrates well.

Despite all these signings the player that will probably help Tech the most is 6-5 George ‘Tic’ Price.

Price transferred to Tech last fall from Virginia Commonwealth where he was a starter his freshman and sophomore years. A ready made player, Price can play either guard or forward. At V.C.U., the Danville native averaged double figures and was a strong rebounder.