Mums’ The Word

Tech Fails in ACC Bid

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. — Just like a big eater at the dessert bar, the Atlantic Coast Conference decided Monday that a pie cut into seven pieces instead of eight provides for larger slices.

In this case, the pie is the ACC basketball tournament, and the eighth piece, which was desired by Virginia Tech, will not be forthcoming.

In a session that might have set a record for brevity, the ACC’s executive committee voted down any expansion, specifically turning down a Tech application which had been sponsored by Virginia, Clemson and Duke.

Although no formal vote was announced, and the committee members remained totally closemouthed, it was not so much a turndown of Tech as it was a vote to maintain the status quo.

In this case, the big issue is money. Most of the money is generated from the basketball tournament, including hundreds of thousands of dollars that pour into the various school coffers merely for the right to buy purchase tickets to the March cage extravaganza.

One ACC source, who did not attend the meeting at the Governor’s Inn halfway between Raleigh and Durham, said he had nothing against Virginia Tech, “but I certainly wouldn’t want to be the one who cut off a couple of hundred of our contributors from tournament tickets.”

Bill Brill

Since that appeared to be the overriding issue, the secret vote seemingly boiled down to one factor: Did Tech have enough to offer to compensate for the revenue loss to the individual schools?

Even though The Roanoke Times & World-News learned last week that the Hokies had made a very attractive offer in a proposal to the ACC, it apparently did not convince the faculty chairmen, most of whom voted on orders from their school administration.

If Tech had been accepted, the Gobblers would have matched a one-seventh share of the current ACC assets, and agreed to take less than a full share of tournament tickets for four years. It was reliably learned that Tech’s financial offer was in the vicinity of a half-million dollars.

The non-voting ACC source said, in his opinion, that it boiled down to a simple evaluation. “Is the league happy with seven teams, happy with the way things are going?”

Since the ACC had two football bowl teams for the fourth consecutive year, and a basketball team (North Carolina) that finished second in the nation, the answer obviously was yes.

Dick Herbert, a long-time sports editor of a Raleigh newspaper who is now executive secretary of the Football Coaches Assn., said on a Monday night radio talk show that he considered any expansion of the ACC, ever, as “very remote.”

South Carolina, the only charter member of the 25-year-old conference to drop out, talked about reapplying earlier this year, but reportedly was discouraged from doing so.

The only other potential ACC member appears to be Georgia Tech, a school with a national name in football and based in Atlanta, a metropolitan center.

The turndown for Tech, although not officially the death knell to the Hokies’ future chances, appeared to be final. Twice Tech has come to the party, but has yet to be asked to dance.

“I wouldn’t say we were downhearted,” said Tech athletic director Frank Moseley, “but I would say we’re disappointed. To get in the ACC would have helped us and I think we would have helped them.”

There can be no question about the first statement. Unfortunately for Tech, the executive committee apparently disagreed with the latter.