Tech Rising To Take Charge in Rivalry With Cavs

If you haven't got a ticket for today's game in Blacksburg between Virginia and Virginia Tech, stay home and watch the game on TV.

Proving once again that football fans in the Old Dominion are among the most patient in the world, some 41,000 are expected in Lane Stadium for their 9th renewal of this rivalry.

Considering that Virginia is the bigger brother in the nation at the moment, and that Tech just last week stumped a six-game losing streak, the capacity crowd is a testament to the strong feelings between the old rivals of the two schools.

In fact, if the proposed addition to Lane Stadium had been done by this season, the crowd would be over 50,000. It is unlikely that a non-sellout crowd ever again will watch the Cavaliers and the Hokies, at least not in the foreseeable future.

The incredible thing is that somebody at Charlottesville, clearly in a moment of stupor, decided a decade ago that the two schools should not play.

So it was that the only time in a quarter-century that these two teams each had a winner—in 1968, when both were 7-4—they did not play each other.

That was the season in which Tech went to the Liberty Bowl and lost to Arkansas Mammong and Mississippi, 34-17, after leading at one time 17-0. That was the beginning of the end for the Jerry Claiborne era at Tech. The Hokies were just the next two seasons and Claiborne, who since has taken Maryland to four consecutive bowls, was fired.

Ironically, Virginia was the team that the Liberty Bowl wanted in '68. The Cavaliers, featuring ACC player of the year Frank Quayle and slick quartermback Gene Arnette, had one of the nation's most explosive offenses. The team scored 325 points in 10 games and participated in one of the wildest contests of all time, the 63-47 victory over Tulane.

But the Cavs couldn't afford to take the bowl offer because Arnette and three other starters were ineligible. They already had received their degrees and were in graduate school.

They were eligible for the regular season but not bowl games. Since then, the NCAA has changed its rules and graduates no longer can play.

The two state rivals did not play for three years, starting in 1967, but the series was resumed in 1970 and will continue from now on.

Virginia dominated the early years, but Tech has taken charge during modern times. Since UVa has had only one winning team, those heroes of '68, in the last 28 seasons, that scarcely comes as a surprise.

Tech now leads in the series, 29-25-4, having won 16 of 21 since UVa entered its football depression in 1963. The Hokies are favored by 20 or 21 points today, but history would dictate at least a close game. They should have a hard time winning by that many.

In fact, the last time that there was a UVa win was in 1961, when the Hokies won 29-0.

Last year was typical of how close it has been. A downtrodden UVa team actually led 17-7 late in the fourth quarter, when a 16-play, 78-yard drive pulled it out for the highly favored Hokies, 14-10.

The year before, at Blacksburg, Tech won a tense struggle, 24-17, stopping a late bid by UVa when tackle...