RICHMOND (UPI) — Bobby Stevens, Virginia Tech's 5-foot-10 sparkplug guard, his team locked in overtime with Notre Dame for the National Invitation Tournament championship, shot from the top of the key and missed.

He hustled to his right, grabbed the rebound and launched a 20-footer. It went in, thus becoming the shot heard across Virginia and the nation, because it gave the Gobblers a 92-91 win over the favored Irish and Virginia its first national basketball championship.

Virginia Tech's NIT performance, where it won four games by a total of five points, rates as Virginia's top sports story of 1973, barely edging out the plight of the Virginia Squires of the American Basketball Association.

The Gobblers stunned a large Madison Square Garden crowd and a national television audience in beating New Mexico 65-63 in the first round. The Techmen fell behind 43-34 at halftime against Fairfield of Connecticut, but rallied for a 77-76 win.

It took a great save by Craig Leider on a floor-length pass that seemed to be headed out of bounds to preserve a 74-73 win over Alabama and the Gobblers were in the finals. They trailed Notre Dame by 12 points with just 6:10 to play, but rallied to send the game into overtime. Down 91-87 in the extra session, Stevens hit a three-point play and then fired in his final basket to give the Cinderella Gobblers the win and important national recognition.