Auburn Nips Hokies

By BILL CATE
Times Sports Writer

AUBURN, Ala. — It was almost like last March in Madison Square Garden. Only this wasn’t Madison Square Garden.

It was like last March when Virginia Tech needed a last-second shot to win the National Invitational Tournament. Only this wasn’t the NIT.

It was like last March when the shot went in. But this wasn’t last March. The shot missed. And Virginia Tech lost to Auburn 76-74 here Saturday night.

It was one of those classic battles, like the four-Tech played last March. It went down to the last shot, one Calvin Wade missed with a second left. Wade, however, certainly could not be held accountable for the loss. His shot was nothing more than a desperation attempt which would have sent the game into overtime.

Tech was a much better team than Auburn, but Don DeVoe’s Hokies, who trailed by as many as seven points, couldn’t throw the ball in the ocean. Auburn shot 52.3 percent while Tech managed a meagerly 28.7. Yet the Tigers won by only two. That ought to tell you something.

“This team just needs to learn how to win.” said DeVoe. “And it will. I’m proud of the way we battled back. We had a chance to win. We just didn’t.”

See Page C-7, Col. 1

Auburn Nips Virginia Tech

From Page C-1

The Hokies trailed until Craig Lieder tied it with a free throw with 5:34 left. With 2:57 left, after two foul shots by Ed Frazier, Tech led by four and apparently had command, but Tech tried to stall and a series of mistakes, including two questionable blocking fouls, put Auburn back in the game.

With a 72-70 lead, Tech’s Wade had what seemed to be an easy layup, but Auburn’s Gary Redding slammed it into the backboard. The Tigers retrieved the ball and guard Mike Christian fired it from left field and the game was tied with 1:04 left.

Auburn went ahead by two when Christian made two free throws after Bobby Stevens fouled him with 28 seconds left. After a Tech time out, Wade took a 15-footer with 13 seconds left which tied the score. Auburn stopped the action with 10 seconds left, then won the game when freshman Eddie Johnson, who finished with 26 points, shot one from the hip. It happened to go in.

Tech’s downfall was definitively its shooting. Craig Lieder, who usually shoots well, made seven of 24 shots and Ed Frazier was pathetic, making only three of 18 attempts from the field. Bobby Stevens, the NIT hero, connected on three of 10. Charlie Thomas was the only respectable shooter, making six of 14.

Auburn’s guards did Tech in. They accounted for 47 points and Hokie guards Stevens and Thomas did not play bad defense.