Tech Loses Cliff-Hanger To Auburn

It seemed like old times-almost.

Virginia Tech had the stage set for its patented NIT finish at Auburn but couldn't pull it off as a last seconds shot by Calvin Wade failed to connect and the Hokies lost, 76-74 to drop to 1-1 for the season going into Monday's game at revenge-hungry Alabama.

Auburn, young upstart of the SEC, kept Tech at bay in the first half as the lead changed hands often.

Tech had a cold shooting spell for most of the game but stayed about even on rebounds, a marked improvement over the opening game.

The Tigers' two hot-shooting guards, Eddie Johnson and Mike Christian, scored 26 and 21 points respectively and Auburn had four men in double figures Craig Lieder and Ed Frazier, despite poor shooting percentages had 20 and 12 points, and Charlie Thomas, hitting on nearly half his attempts from the field, had 14, the only double figure scorers for the visitors.

Tech started battling in earnest in the dying minutes as Lieder, Frazier, and Wade scored a flurry of points in a battle against mainly Johnson and Christian. After two free throws were made good by Christian with 28 seconds remaining after a foul by Bobby Stevens, Tech still had a chance. Johnson's bucket gave Auburn a two-point lead and Tech called time out with 3 seconds on the clock. Wade's shot missed and the first road game was a loss.

The Hokies' next home appearance will be Monday night against Ohio State. Tech defeated the Buckeyes at Columbus last year in what was the turning point for that championship season. WSLS-11 (10) will televise the game.