Tech subs show they’ve matured

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BLACKSBURG — Another plateau has been reached in the era of Don DeVoe-coached basketball teams.

Now Virginia Tech can claim to have real depth. For example, a year ago the Hokies could not send in a complete team of subs and hold a lead. Tech tried this against a weak Georgia Southern team, and DeVoe had to call on the front line to save the Hokies from falling, overcome by a sensational rally.

But here Saturday night, in an 85-74 trouncing of Florida, Tech's subs didn’t wilt. With eight minutes left in the game, and the Hokies on top by 20, DeVoe had the second team playing.

When the game finished, a unit composed mostly of junior varsity players was on the floor. And the Gators really never threatened to catch up during this period.

"I was never worried that our bench could maintain the lead," said DeVoe who has insisted that this Tech team has depth. "I think this is an example of our depth."

Craig Lieder, one of the Tech players who had to rush back in to save the Georgia Southern game last winter, wasn't worried about this year's team holding the lead.

"I really didn't think about last year. But in depth we're pretty good. We're at least 10 players deep. Coach DeVoe can put them in and they'll do the job," said the Tech captain.

Ed Frazier, another Tech starter, explained it a different way.

"I know," he said, "that if they didn't put it in the hole, they have board strength to get another shot or stop the other team."

Of course some of the starters did well. Lieder and Frazier led Tech's scoring with 15 points each. Guard Charlie Thomas added 13 to complete the list of double figure point-makers. Kyle McKee fired in six second-half points and pulled down seven rebounds in limited play. And guard Dave Sensabaugh came off the bench to score nine points.

"I'll say this about McKee," said Florida Coach John Lotz on Tech's 6-3½ sophomore. "He'll be better as a senior than Allan Bristol was. He's quicker. He's just young now, but as a senior he'll be really, really good."

Sensabaugh's performance was a nice bonus. DeVoe had hardly used him against North Carolina two nights earlier and it must have cut deeply at the sophomore who has played well for two years.

"I really hadn't played much since the Alabama game," said Sensabaugh. "This helped my confidence. I was sort of getting down."

Although the figures don't reflect the job Calvin Wade did, he was really the key to the game. He scored six points and got three rebounds. But it all came in a stretch during the first half when Tech rallied to get ahead of the Gators.

However, Wade suffered a knee injury while tipping in his second basket and was forced to leave the game.

"He (Wade) gave us the initial burst we needed," said DeVoe. "He was responsible for us coming from behind."

DeVoe also pointed out that some defensive adjustments were made at the start of the second half so that Florida stopped getting back cuts for easy layups or shots that they had in the opening 20 minutes.

"They had to shoot outside," said DeVoe. "We just didn't pressure the ball on the perimeter as much."

The change resulted in Florida going scoreless from the field for the first six minutes and when they got their first field goal Tech had already run off 13 straight points for a 48-36 lead.

Tech now takes a Christmas break, returning tomorrow night for a practice session. The Hokies leave Wednesday for Oklahoma City and the All-College tournament. They'll face Houston in the first round Thursday night at 10 p.m. (EST).