Virginia Tech Gobblers Manhandle Gators 85-74, Prepare For Houston

By Bill Mason
Sport Editor
BLACKSBURG—Virginia Tech displayed more power than it has shown this season, overcame the hot-shooting defensively stubborn Florida Gators' strong first half to come back after intermission to blow the visitors off the court, leading at times by 20 points. The final count was Tech 85, Florida 74.

Only the uneventful offense of third stringers kept the final margin from being higher as the dugout Gobbler defense forced turnovers. What the Tech defense didn't do, the accumulation of personal fouls in a physically rough game did as Florida's last hopes died with the departure from the game of varsity talent.

Tech came out for the second half acting as if it had just viewed films of last season's 17-point thrashing at Florida, and proceeded to pile up points with ease while holding the Gators scoreless for about the first eight minutes.

Before Florida's composure returned, its chances of winning were gone. Subs Dave Sensibaugh, Dennis Shrewsberry and Duke Thorpe were outstanding in the last 20 minutes, Shrewsberry finding his considerable shooting eye for the first time.

Coach Don DeVoe praised sixth man Calvin Wade for turning the tide with aggressive play that gave the momentum back to Tech. Ready to break out after a rugged road trip to even its record at 3-3 with the All-College tournament at Oklahoma City awaiting for it. Tech takes on Houston TONIGHT in first round action.

Wade suffered an apparent knee injury when he went up for a shot under the basket while off balance and came down hard. The extent of Wade's injury was not known and he is considered doubtful for the tournament.

DeVoe said he was encouraged by the game's outcome but, "We're still looking for that 40-minute game." The Tech defense didn't try to pressure the perimeter in the second half, he said, but effectively kept Florida away from the inside and they couldn't be a threat with outside shooting alone. Tech's defense, he added, forced Florida into mistakes.

The coach said forward Ed Frazier "had one of his better games." Frazier regained his shooting accuracy with 7 of 11 from the field and a free throw, alone with two assists, ending with 15 points and tying Craig Lieder for the point lead. Lieder stayed in the thick of the action, scoring 12 rebounds and getting four assists.

Completing the Tech scoring were Charlie Thomas with 13, Sensibaugh, 9; Thorpe, 7; Wade and [illegible] McKee, each 6, and Bobby Stevens, 4. Tech outrebounded Florida by a whopping 55-27.

Florida's Chip Williams and Gene Stuy, who had been averaging 25 and 23.3 points per game, came away with 9 and 12 respectively while Steve Williams had 15. The Gators shot 57.7 percent on field goals in the first half.

DeVoe observed that it was "the first time we could play people and not be in tense situations," and added that the score was no indication of the game. The score, he felt, could have been much higher on Tech's side.

The Gators will play three games in the All-College (four if they make the finals). Entering the tourney with an even season record, "We'll return winners or losers." DeVoe concluded on the demanding and crucial December schedule. Tech has two games at home next week, Eastern Kentucky Thursday, Jan. 3, and St. Bonaventure Saturday, Jan. 5.

Tech Faces Cougars
Tonight In Tourney

Virginia Tech and the University of Houston Cougars collide tonight at 9 in the second day of the first round of the Oklahoma City All-College basketball tournament and both hope to continue tournament-winning ways.

Houston won the last tournament in which it got a foothold, the Astro-Bluebonnet classic of last season, and Tech won the NIT. The Cougars lost out in the first game of last season's NCAA playoffs.

Getting into tonight's game, Tech and Houston are even in previous meetings, 1-1.

Yesterday's opening day activity pitted Southwestern University of Texas against Southern Cal and Rutgers against host Oklahoma City. Oral Roberts will battle Weber State in tonight's earlier game, preceding the Hokie-Cougar clash.

The Coogs look formidable on the basis of early season statistics, which show guard Eddie Ricks shooting field goals at a 57.1% accuracy clip, followed by Maurice Presley, a center, with 51.4, forward Louis Dunbar with 40.4 and Sidney Edwards, another center, with 50%. Edwards had a 73.7% average on free throws, Presley 100% (4 for 4) and Dunbar 60%.

Dunbar has had the highest UTD point total so far, 30 against Washburn at home. With 150 points in five games, Dunbar has boosted his career total to 688.

Houston was 2-3 late last week and Tech was 2-2 headed into last weekend's meetings with highly-regarded in-state North Carolina (rated third nationally) and the team building a reputation as spoiler, the Florida Gators.

The last time a Houston basketball team got off to a 2-3 start the team rallied for a 20-7 season and a trip to the NCAA playoffs in the 1971-72 season.

Eight teams are entered in the All-College SemiFinals are set for Dec. 28 (Friday) and the consolation and championship games will be held Dec. 29 (Saturday).