Thomas sparkles for Tech

By BOB TEITLEBAUM
Sports Writer
BLACKSBURG - Eastern Kentucky's Carl Brown probably wishes he had never seen Charlie Thomas of Virginia Tech.

Brown ever had any doubts about Thomas' defensive ability, he changed his mind after last night. Brown, who was averaging better than 17 points a game, got just eight under the close scrutiny of Thomas. When it was over Brown had fouled out early in the second half in a fit of frustration and Tech had romped past Eastern Kentucky, 92-65.

"He (Brown) tried to dominate me instead of playing his own game," said the Tech senior guard. "After a while I just started laughing at him. He got mad. And there is no way you can play mad. But I really think he was trying to show me up on defense."

Thomas said, considering that Brown is supposed to be one of the best in the country, this might be one of his best defensive games since he came to Tech last year from Ferrum. Brown, who goes to the boards well, was told to try to take Thomas inside.

"Coach (Jim) Hallihan (Tech assistant coach) told me to front him," said Thomas, "when he came low and just pressure him when he was outside. He tried to bull me, push me around."

Thomas' defensive show was just part of the story for Tech. The Gobblers, in squaring their record at 5-5, shot 50 per cent from the floor, hitting 37 of 74 shots.

Tech was superior in the first half as it piled up a 51-26 lead connecting on 21 of 40 shots from the floor and outrebounding Eastern by 10.

The shooting was about the same in the last 20 minutes, but Tech's rebounding sagged a bit as the Gobblers stopped blocking out Eastern's front line.

"If we played a whole game like we did the first 20 minutes, it would have been a rout," said Tech Coach Don DeVoe.

DeVoe can be excused for not thinking the game was a rout. His team doubled the score, 89-30, early in the second half, then saw Eastern come back within 17 points with seven minutes left. That's why it didn't seem like a rout in the true sense of the word.

"We got a little sluggish in the second half," said Tech senior forward Ed Frazier in trying to explain the team's letdown. "That first half was the best we've played this year. We played as well against Southwestern in Oklahoma City, but they're not as good as Eastern."

"I really don't know when we'll put two halves together. But I sure would like to see it," he finished.

Tech's guards at play - Charlie Thomas (left) drives past Carl Brown; Bobby Stevens makes long pass past Ron Smith

The scoring hero for the Gobblers was again Craig Lieder, who hit 30 points. Lieder had 23 with six minutes remaining in the first half and someone thought he heard Allan Bristow, now a Philadelphia 76er, shouting to get Lieder out before he broke the school record of 52 points - set by Bristow.

When Lieder came back in the second half he got in foul trouble and spent much of the time on the bench. He finished with a late flurry to get his second straight game of at least 30 points.

"I was pleased with the patience we showed early to get the ball inside to Craig," said DeVoe. "Our shot selection wasn't as good in the second half and we didn't get the ball to Lieder as much."

The Hokies came right back tonight against St. Bonaventure here as they try for three wins in a row. In the preliminary game last night, Tech's junior varsity routed Palmer Junior College, coached by former Roanoke Danny Monk, 91-73. Mark Cartwright, former Martinsville star who just became eligible, led Tech with 22 points while ex-Halifax star Howard White pitched in a game high 24 for Palmer.