Gobblers try to bounce back

By BOB TEITLEBAUM

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—With 1111 Virginia Tech bounce back in the consolation bracket of the All-College basketball tournament?

If so, the Hokies will have to win two games from either Weber State, Oklahoma City University or Southwestern of Texas.

The Hokies were pushed into the losers' bracket here last night as Houston thumped them 85-66 in a game that was more one-sided than the final score.

The Hokies were to face Weber State today at 4 p.m. (EST) in the first consolation bout. Tomorrow Tech will either play for fifth place or seventh place in the tournament according to today's outcome.

And the opponent will be the winner of this afternoon's first game between Oklahoma City or Southwestern.

There is more to the story, though. Tech, now 3-1, must win twice here to escape December with a winning record. Otherwise, the defending NIT champs will be on skid row with a rather lackluster first month.

Tech's shooting was unbelievably poor against the tall Cougars. The regulars—Bobby Stevens, Kyle McKee, Charlie Thomas, Ed Frazier and Craig Lieder—managed only 21 field goals out of 67 attempts for 31 per cent.

Stevens, who hit the winning shot in the NIT title game, was shutout completely. Frazier made only three of 16, Thomas seven of 18 and Lieder eight of 21. McKee hit well, comparatively, with three of seven falling in, but he left because of foul trouble in the first half and played sparingly after intermission.

"There's no reason why we did this," said Lieder, who hit 17 points in the first half and only made three foul shots in the final 20 minutes.

"This is one of those games you hope your opponent has, except they didn't, we did," Lieder says the team will regroup in the consolation bracket. "Look at it like this, they're (Weber State) playing in the consolation game also. They had a tough game and I'm sure they thought they could have won it in the end," said Lieder referring to Weber State's 62-59 loss to Oral Roberts.

Houston's height didn't hurt in the rebounding department. The much shorter Hokies got only five less rebounds. But the Cougars did intimidate Tech shooters, blocking several shots and causing the officials to give the Hokies a few goaltending calls.

"It made you hesitate," said Thomas about the shooting difficulties presented by Houston. "They were blocking everything that went up."

Goal tending calls were the only way Tech was able to score in the opening 10 minutes of the second half. The Hokies got only two buckets, both ruled good on Houston blocks, until sub Geoff Wiggins fired in a jump shot with 10:16 left in the game.

Wiggins was in the game because Tech Coach Don DeVoe gave up on the regulars and sent in the second unit. All this had come four minutes earlier when Houston's lead had mounted to 62-37 and it was only a matter of finishing the game.

Still, DeVoe did not blame the team. He shouldered the responsibility for not getting Tech together, for a practice on Christmas night from a holiday break, but Stevens, Lieder, Dave Sensibaugh and Wiggins couldn't get to Blacksburg because weather forced the cancellation of their flights.

"I should have had the foresight to get them back early enough," DeVoe said. "Against Weber State we'll have to bust ourselves to get going again."

The Tech coach said the lack of a rugged workout was just enough to throw the Hokies' timing off key.

"Still," said DeVoe, optimistically, "on our worst night we were only 10 baskets away from a team that I really think is good."