They goofed on Kyle McKee

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BLACKSBURG — St. Bonaventure Coach Jim Satalin was unhappy.

It wasn’t over the officiating after his team lost to Virginia Tech 77-75 here Saturday night. It was with his scouting report.

“Every scouting report we had said the most Kyle McKee (Virginia Tech center) would score would be four points,” said the first-year Bonnie coach.

“It wasn’t Glenn’s (Price) fault (that McKee scored 18 points). We told him to lay back and help on (Craig) Lieder. We gave McKee the long shot and he makes everything he throws up there.”

What Satalin was saying was that McKee is a sleeper. He can hurt a team when it least expects it.

Actually, the Richmond, Ind., native has been a sleeper most of his basketball career. He was shunned by the Big 10 and other schools he might have chosen over Tech. He was even turned aside by his high school coach. But Tech Coach Sonny Smith saw something in McKee and offered him a scholarship two years ago.

“I didn’t get any offers from some of the schools that I might have wanted to attend,” said McKee, who was hitting mostly from the outside rather than underneath like a center should.

“Coach Smith came down and saw my school play. It was the only night he got to see me. I was injured after that and didn’t play when I got back.”

Why didn’t he play when he recovered from the injury? “That’s a good question,” replied the shy blond bomber who moves with a graceful quickness for a 6-9 player.

“I’m a sleeper. I was disappointed with my senior year. I felt I was a question mark. My statistics were really poor. I hope I’m still not a question mark.”

McKee has had some difficulty this season. He has spent most games in foul trouble. He picks them up in bunches rather than one at a time. But Saturday night McKee didn’t get a first-half foul. However, he picked up four in 15 minutes of the second half and was removed.

“I don’t know how I kept out of foul trouble,” the sophomore said. “I usually get them when I get tired.”

Another trouble spot for McKee has been layups. He has missed a bunch of easy shots that a center has to make. Maybe that’s why he moved outside to hit seven long jumpers which must have left St. Bonaventure wondering if Tech had found another player.

“I was a forward in high school and didn’t play much underneath the basket,” recalled McKee. “I like being a forward better and I’m more effective offensively than when I am under the basket.”

“I haven’t been playing without confidence. But I haven’t played like I can,” he added.

So what is McKee’s fondest wish? Not a 30-point night. “I’d like to see Tech recruit a big center,” he said matter-of-factly.

While McKee stayed off any St. Bonaventure plans for upsetting the Hokies, the game didn’t leave Tech Coach Don DeVoe in a good mood. It did move the Gobblers on the winning side of the ledger with a 6-5 mark, though.

“I wasn’t pleased at all with our defensive efforts,” DeVoe remarked. “We tried different types of pressure on different people. Nothing was very successful.”

There was one move, however, that paid off for Tech. DeVoe inserted sophomore Dave Sensibaugh into the lineup in the second half for Bobby Stevens. Sensibaugh began putting pressure on Bonnie guard Steve Hocker and Tech went ahead.

The Hokies even had a six-point lead with six minutes left, but St. Bonaventure came back to within a point with four minutes left. Then Tech, which always controlled some sort of a lead, had a chance to ice the win as Charlie Thomas had two free throws with three seconds left.

Thomas missed both shots and the Bonnies’ Essie Hollis, a freshman who scored 20 points, got away a desperation heave. It bounded away to give Tech the win.

The Hokies now have a road trip Thursday to Florida State before returning here next Saturday against the Athletes in Action.