Gobblers Edge Past Richmond

BY JERRY RATCLIFFE
Times Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG — Bobby Stevens, of NIT fame, almost pulled off what he is famous for at Virginia Tech Saturday night when the little guard from Norfolk went to the foul line with only six seconds left and Tech holding a mere one-point lead.

Stevens hit the first shot of the two shot foul to give the Gobblers a 70-68 lead over Richmond. But Stevens missed the second shot which would have iced the victory, but an alert Craig Lieder grabbed the rebound and dropped it back in with only three seconds showing to give Tech a 72-68 win over the Spiders.

Stevens had put the Hokies ahead with a free throw with 1:26 to go at 69-66, but the high scoring Aron Stewart, the fourth leading scorer in the nation last year, sank a bucket to cut it to 69-68.

The Techmen then went into a stall looking for what Coach Don DeVoe called after the game “nothing but an uncontested lay-up.”

With less than 15 seconds left, the Gobblers’ Charlie Thomas saw an opening and burst through, but the ball was tipped away. Thomas controlled the ball and passed it to Stevens but the Gobblers were called for three seconds.

That gave Richmond the ball, trailing by one, with only 13 seconds left. Tech applied full court pressure and Thomas tapped the ball away which was headed for Richmond’s Mike Sanford near mid court.

Stevens grabbed the tap and drove toward the hoop but was fouled by a pursuing Sanford with six seconds left, which set up the last second’s heroic by Stevens and Lieder.

The game was tight nearly all the way as Stewart kept the Spiders in the game every time Tech threatened to open it up in the first half. The senior forward hit 15 straight points to keep Richmond only six points down just before the half, although Tech did manage to grab a 42-35 lead at intermission.

Inspired play by sophomore Mike Collins, off the bench, gave Tech a 50-41 lead early in the second half. Richmond Coach Lewis Mills put his Spiders in a zone for the first time in the game which enabled them to come back and keep it close. Baskets by Stewart and 6-7 Eric Gray made it 56-51 with 8:22 to go.

Then Pulaski’s Dennis Shrewsberry tapped in a basket over the much taller Gray, then out-rebounded him defensively to give Thomas a basket on the fast break to make it 60-51.

But as DeVoe said later, the Gobblers could not gain control of the game. Stewart led charges that cut it to 64-61 with 4:42 remaining, before a technical foul was called on De Voe. Stewart went for the line and hit the shot to cut it to 64-62 and the Spiders got the ball out of bounds. But Gray failed to cash in on an inside shot which would have tied the score.