Hokies Win, 75-74

Tech Nips Huskies On Foul Shot Miss

DEKALB, ILL. — A clutch second half performance by Virginia Tech freshman forward Duke Thorpe helped supply the struggling Gobblers to a 75-74 win over the fledgling Northern Illinois Huskies here Monday night.

But it took a missed three throw by Northern freshman John Fisher with only three seconds remaining to insure Tech with the win. Fisher went to the line with a one-and-one opportunity with his team trailing only by one in the see-saw affair. Fisher had been fouled by Tech guard Bobby Stevens (his fifth personal) with only three seconds showing after the Huskies had stalled over a minute looking for the game’s final shot.

But Fisher missed the front end of the charity toss and Tech sophomore, 6-9 Kyle McKeel came down with the rebound. He was tied up for a jump ball, and tipped it on the jump to sophomore Dave Sinsbaugh, but all that was academic when only one second remained when McKeel cleared the rebound.

The win was Tech’s first on the road this season and vaults the defending NIT champions to 9-7 on the year. It’s the first time this season that the Huskies have been two full games above .500. For Northern Illinois, whose ranks have been depleted by ineligible players, the Huskies slipped to a disappointing 4-13 mark.

The Huskies, playing before a sparse crowd of 1,200, started two freshmen and played several more. Northern Coach Emory Luck was forced to do this after two starters became ineligible at mid-term and another, Huskie scoring and rebound great Jim Bradley was declared ineligible for assumedly signing a pre contract.

Both teams experienced cold shooting in the opening minutes as the tight man-for-man defense of Northern stymied the Tech offense. In fact, the Huskies led the entire first half, having a 10 point lead of 20-10, cut to two at 24-22 with 7:15 left. But the Huskies made it 8 again at 30-22 before the Techmen staged a rally that saw Thorpe and Thomas cut it to 36-34 before Northern’s Fisher and guard Floyd Williams put the hosts ahead at 38-34 with 30 seconds left in the first half. But Tech season scoring leader, Craig Lieder, brought Tech back within two with two charity shots to cut it to 38-36, with 18 seconds left.

Sophomore Mike Collins knocked the game at 38 apiece on a jumper from the right of the baseline with only one second left to tie it at intermission. The Huskies, easily underdogs, controlled the boards over their equal-sized opponents, with big Dan McDowell grabbing 13 as NI led in that department, 33-22. Both teams hit 38 per cent from the field the first half.

But Tech charged into the lead in the early goings of the second half and took a 44-38 lead. As has been the case recently, Tech could not take charge of the contest and with 15 minutes left Tech led 48-44.

Then the Huskies built their biggest lead of the night at eight points when Thomas hit a jumper to make it 52-44. Williams got hot, and his outside shooting and drives along with McDowell and Tim Bryant’s inside work cut it to 56-57 with 9:45 left to play.

Thorpe kept connecting for a 67-59 lead with the help of Collins, then the Huskies began shooting away at the lead again until it was only 67-65 as Carroll Holmes converted a three point play on a Calvin Wade foul with 4:47 left. Stevens made it 69-65 but again Wade fouled Holmes for a three-point play to make it 69-68.

Stevens fouled Bryant later and the Huskie responded by tying the score at 69 apiece then putting Northern ahead on the bonus shot, 70-69.

Thorpe scored to make it 71-70, but on a turnover, Bryant put the Huskies ahead again, 72-71. With 2:49 left McDowell fouled out and Lieder hit two free throws as again the lead changed hands, 73-72 Tech.

Frazier had a chance with 2:04 left, but missed the front end of a bonus chance. Northern reserve, 6-4 junior forward Bill Newton put the hosts ahead for the last time at 74-73.

But with 1:12 left, Thomas’s 15-foot jumper gave Tech a 75-74 lead. Northern then went into a stall maneuver looking for the last shot, or to draw fouls, only stopping with a timeout of 28 seconds left to assure strategy.

They drew the foul with three seconds but again, Fisher missed the chance for the Huskies and Tech won for the first time on the road. It was the sixth straight Tech game that has been decided in the final minute and a half of play.

Thorp played his best with a career high 20 points, 14 of those coming in the second half. Lieder and Thomas had 16 each. Collins 9 and Stevens 8. Pulaski’s Dennis Shrewsbury, considered strong bench strength, did not see action.

Bryant led NI with 16, followed by Williams and McDowell with 14 each and Holmes with 12.

Tech hosts William & Mary Thursday, Wake Forest Saturday and red hot Toledo next Wednesday.