Gobblers Outclass Wm. & Mary, 80-61

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BLACKSBURG — Duke Thorpe is becoming sort of a folk hero at Virginia Tech.

When the phenomenal, even-improving freshman from small West Point High in Virginia comes off the bench, the chant of "Duke, Duke, Duke" resounds all over the Tech Coliseum, much like the name "Juice" rings out in an 80,000-seat football stadium in Buffalo, N.Y.

Thorpe came off the bench Thursday night to perk up a dragging Gobbler squad and helped the Hokies keep their string of home games intact over state opponents by lashing William & Mary's Indians, 80-61. It was Tech's 51st straight win at home against state competition.

After a slow first half, Tech picked up the pace a bit, then slumped again before the 6:5, 190-pound forward re-entered the lineup. Tech led at intermission by virtue of a last second shot by Craig Lieder, the Hokies' season scoring leader, which pushed the Techmen ahead 31-29.

It was 37-33 after five minutes of play in the second half, before the Gobblers got things moving. Lieder converted a technical foul shot and Charlie Thomas, who had an off night offensively and defensively, hit for a 40-33 lead.

Then Lieder hit again and quick Bobby Stevens came around with his best performance since his "shot heard around the world," a last second shot that beat Notre Dame in the title N.I.T. game last year. Stevens stole the ball and laid it in, then hit a 25 footer for a 44-33 lead, which the Tribe could not overcome.

Thorpe, only the fourth black basketball player signed to a full grant-in-aid in the school's history, checked in with 13:32 showing, for a hesitant shooting Kyle McKee.

Thorpe hit, then Calvin Wade made a magnificent steal and pass to Thomas who had a snowbird for a 50-33 lead.

In the last eight minutes of the game, Thorpe hit 16 of Tech's final 26 points, including 12 straight points to pace the win. It was the second straight 20-plus performance for Thorpe off the bench.

"For a year and a half, we've been trying to get Kyle McKee (6-9, 192) to make the turn and take the ball to the basket," said Gobbler head coach Don DeVoe. "But Kyle acts like there's an 8-foot man standing there; he rushes his shots. But Duke (Thorpe) doesn't do that," DeVoe said.

The Hokie mentor, now in his third season, said that against teams like Wm. — Mary and Richmond, that it "takes longer to get the rhythm going."

Tech is now 10-7 on the season and hosts Wake Forest (see related story above) Saturday night. William & Mary, coached by Ed Ashnault, is now 4-11 on the season.

The Indians started three sophomores and two freshmen who played most of the night.

Washington, D.C. fresh Ron Satterthwaite led the Tribe with 14 points, followed by two sophs, Mike Arizin with 13 and Matt Courage 11.

Stevens had 19 (9-0-14 from the field) and Lieder added 17.

Pulaski's Dennis Shrewsberry clocked four minutes of playing time.

"Stevens' shooting range was admirable tonight," said DeVoe, who noted that Stevens had been shooting only 34 per cent on the season. A hot streak like this could give Wake Forest trouble. DeVoe called Thorpe a super-sub, and said that it wasn't an easy game to win.