Gobbler Triumph, 80-69

Coach Blasts Officials, Va. Tech Blasts Toledo

By JERRY RATCLIFFE
Times Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG—Mississippi State coach Kermit Davis denied reports of criticizing officials (see related story today) in Arkadelphia, Miss., Wednesday night, but Wednesday night at Blacksburg, Toledo Rockets Coach Bob Nicholson and assistant coach James McDonald made no efforts to hide their feelings toward officials in their game with Virginia Tech.

The two Toledo coaches drew three technical fouls from ACC referee John Lucas, and after the game, which Toledo lost, Nicholson had this to say in Russell after chasing him down the corridor at the Tech Coliseum:

"That's the worst job of officiating I've ever seen," Nicholson screamed. "Those technical fouls were a result of incompetency. They'll [Tech] want you back for every game.

The Rockets coach barked.

Russell, who did get some people upset, was jumped on last week by Clemson Coach Tales Locke against North Carolina, in which Locke claimed Russell lost the game for him, and dared him in the final minutes to call a technical foul on him. Russell didn't, by the way.

But a basketball game was played in Blacksburg. The Gobbler, now 1-8 on the season, with just two of those losses at home, had their best shooting night of the season (47 per cent) in beating highly regarded Toledo, 80-69.

Actually the big thing was that Tech, for the first time this season, had the scoring leader Craig Laird, who was out nursing injured ribs. Laird had been averaging 18.4 points per game.

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McKee were burning the nets for point lead at 52-30 with 3:36 left in the half as the contest took on the appearance of a rout.

But then the Rockets came storming back into contention with Brown re-entering the game to control the boards and bat away half a dozen inside shots.

The Gobbler struggled to get back into the game, using a zone trap defense to harass Hokie ballhandlers and getting several turnovers.

Using big Mike Larsen and shooting by Jim Kindle, Toledo ripped off ten straight unanswered points to cut it 52-40 with 11:32 left.

And in a four-minute Rocket rally, Toledo outscored the Gobbler 22-7 and with 5:06 left, Tech held a slim 53-50 lead which was large enough for the rest of the game.

Easter and Frazier along with Thomas and Lieder, who had been the chief source of offense for the Hokies, were held just into the 10th. Thomas committed his fourth foul and Kindle hooked a shot and it was in.

In the first 20 minutes, they ran our offense poorly," the Rockets boss said.

Then guard Bobby Stevens took over for Tech scoring 11 of the last 17 Gobbler points down the stretch for the 80-69 victory.

Both teams placed five players in double digits, with Thorpe leading Tech with 16, followed by Stevens 14, Mike Collins 13, Thomas 12 and Frazier 11. For Toledo, Mike Parker had 10, Kindle 14, Brown 11 and Larsen and Cole 10 points.

Nichols, obviously upset by the officiating, said later, half-jokingly, "this guy [Russell], thought he was still in the ACC. The ACC has a rule that you can't foul the door and protest the call, we don't have that rule in Ohio," he said.

"We didn't play well the first half," said coach Easter. "We shot poorly and it was in the game without Lieder. But we fought hard in the 2nd half against their zone and worked well inside," said the 32-year-old DeVoe. "We played a fine game for 14 or 15 minutes then lost the ball and gave them the momentum to get back in the game."

He added, "Ed Frazier had one of his best games. We played the first half very well, the first five minutes of the second half. But their zone trap all of a sudden gave us trouble and they came back on us. I wasn't pleased with the defense the last five minutes of the game. But you have to consider we had some pretty young kids in there then, in McKee, Collins and Thorpe. Toledo is not a bad team, remember now that they've been winning," he pointed out.

"Bobby Stevens got the clutch points for us near the end, in-