Cartwright is Gobblers' bright spot

From Staff Dispatches

COLUMBIA, S.C.—As the Gamecock band played the South Carolina alma mater, Frank McGuire and Virginia Tech sophomore Mark Cartwright stood in the middle of Carolina Coliseum.

McGuire's South Carolina basketball team, obviously heading for the NCAA tournament, had just defeated Virginia Tech 82-71.

A year ago, Cartwright had been a promising freshman at South Carolina. Here last night, he was even more promising as a sophomore transfer for Virginia Tech.

It was Cartwright's shooting in the first half, five-for-seven from downtown, that made McGuire change defenses, from a 2-3 zone to a man-to-man.

Cartwright, a surprise starter in place of Bobby Stevens, finished with 14 points and some accolades from McGuire.

"He can really shoot," McGuire said. "I've always known he was a good shooter. He's a real nice kid and I wish him well at Virginia Tech."

McGuire told Cartwright after the game that his hot streak in the first half forced the Gamecocks to change defenses.

"It was like he was telling me there are no hard feelings because I transferred to Tech," Cartwright said.

Just why did Cartwright transfer?

"Let's just say it was a difference in basketball philosophy," Cartwright said. "I was more interested in team basketball than they are here (at South Carolina). Coach McGuire likes one-on-one basketball, but there isn't any hard feelings between us. I just wanted to transfer to Tech."

Regardless of philosophy and regardless of Cartwright's fine shooting performance, McGuire is one up. South Carolina won, Tech lost.

"I guess I got to start because I had transferred from here," Cartwright said. "I guess Coach (Don) DeVoe figured I wouldn't be as tight here. And I really wasn't, especially after the first shot went in.

"Also, I knew what to expect from South Carolina. I spent last fall and winter guarding Mike Dunleavy. I didn't see anything new."

Maybe Cartwright didn't, but DeVoe did. South Carolina freshman Nate Davis was unstoppable. There is no way to defend someone who plays up in the air. Tech's defense was not that bad. Davis simply jumped over it on his way to 19 points.

Davis and Alexander English rejected several Tech attempts and DeVoe bitterly complained about the officiating, saying that goaltending should have been called several times.

DeVoe had a legitimate point. South Carolina definitely played above the rim on several occasions.

"I couldn't believe it," said DeVoe. "South Carolina goaltended several times and it was never called. They are better than we are anyway, but I was happy with the way we played. We just didn't get any breaks."

Tech kept it just close enough to be respectable.

Down by 12 at the half and 19 midway of the second half, Tech made a mini-rally which was disrupted by those rejections from above the rim.

"They'll read on the West Coast tomorrow that Virginia Tech was beaten by only 11 points by a nationally ranked team at home," DeVoe said.

He almost sounded like he had won.

—Bill Cate