Revitalized Gobblers Clobber Mercer Bears In Home Action

By Bill Mason
Sports Editor

BLACKSBURG—Showing slam-bang determination that apparently foreshadows a warm finish to a cold season, Virginia Tech broke the momentum of the normally high scoring Mercer Bears and stormed to a 75-65 victory in the final home appearance of the season.

Senior Craig Lieder had 24 points (7 of 12 from the field and 10 of 11 free throws), the last of which put him at the 1,000 career point mark, with two games remaining.

Other seniors in their last home showing made it memorable in their own ways. Forward Ed Frazier overcame a shaky start to play one of the better games of his career, stopping the visitors on defense when it counted most, and tossing in 15 points.

Guards Bobby Stevens and Charlie Thomas provided hustle and clutch points, Thomas only slightly slowed by a minor thigh injury. Stevens contributed 10 points and Thomas 9, plus 6 assists.

Calvin Wade led in Tech rebounds with 7 and scored 7 points and the only other senior, Tim Harvey, entered the game late and failed to score.

Tech started strongly, but not consistently, building up a respectable lead that threatened to evaporate as cold-shooting Mercer (38 percent in the first half) started to get warmer.

With Tech holding a tenuous 33-30 lead and time running out, sub Mark Cartwright popped in a long two-hander as the half ended, making it 35-30.

Tech put the pressure on the Bears (17-4 going into the game with a scoring average of 88 points per game) in the second half, with a rash of scoring steals and an offense aided by the insertion of Duke Thorpe.

Coach Don DeVoe said after the game: “We had the people standing for the first time in a long time—it was that kind of basketball.” Tech drew several standing ovations from the crowd on crucial steals and alert play that pushed them to a 61-49 lead at one point.

DeVoe said it was “a great way for Craig to bow out, getting his 1,000th point,” and noted that Frazier “stopped them so many times at the basket.”

He praised Thomas for playing well despite a sore thigh and said Tim Harvey had given the team a lift throughout the season.

The coach admitted that he had been reluctant to put Tim in the game since he still has not completely recovered from a foot injury received on the road, but “Jim (Hallihan, assistant coach) said we really did need him.”

He commented, “We kept them from playing run. They were held well below their 88 point average. Our defense controlled the game for us.”

DeVoe concluded, “It’s good to get back in control of things and play the kind of game you want to play. It was great to go into the dressing room and see the guys all smiling. It looks like we may have a winning season.”

The Gobblers, now 13-11, go to Charlottesville Wednesday (TOMORROW) to meet Virginia, which hopes to rebound from its embarrassment of last Saturday at the hands of North Carolina.

Tech ends its season next Saturday at George Washington.

That’s A Charge!

Leonard ‘Slick’ Hardin of Mercer College charges into senior Ed Frazier and sending Ed down on to the floor while (32) Mark Cartwright studies the action. Hardin scored 10 points and pulled down 6 rebounds for the Bears while Frazier player a super game as he hit 50 per cent of his field goals, 5 of 8 at the line and helped the Hokies stop the Bears from running and gunning their offense. With the win, Va. Tech upped their record to 13-11.

(Journal photo by Dave J. Bisel.)