Virginia Tech should thank its lucky nets for the return of the dunk this season.

The rejuvenated and legalized stuff shot was about the only move that kept Hokie fans awake Monday night in Cassell Coliseum and it was probably the only motivating force pushing the Tech cagers down the court during a 98-70 drubbing of Charleston Baptist (S.C.).

"We shouldn't have taken them lightly," admitted senior forward Duke Thorpe in the relaxed Tech locker room after the game. "We were not too excited over the game."

Thorpe was one of three Hokies who pulled off the slam-bam hoop act for the first time in their college careers Monday night. Another senior, center Ernest Wansley, and sophomore guard Marshall Ashford joined Thorpe after the game in celebrating basketball's most recently legalized weapon.

"It feels good," smiled Thorpe who led Hokie scoring with 18 points and rebounding with ten snags. "When you throw one down, the crowd is on your side."

Before the 6-6 senior tuned the crowd up with a dunk, he had to turn off one Buccaneer-Joe Nix. Early in the second half the opposing forwards almost decided to take the competition to their fists instead of to the nets. Tempers flared, pushing ensued and then the obvious was announced a double technical foul. "He was holding me," said Thorpe after the game. "So I just kinda pushed him off and he came back swinging. I'm not a fighter really."

On Monday night Thorpe, Ashford and Wansley were dunkers and their efforts gave the fans the most to cheer about. The 6-2 Ashford offered the crowd a lot of appeal when he slammed the ball through halfway into the second period in route to his 17 points.

"I couldn't dunk it like I wanted to," lamented the sophomore who chose Tech over four ACC schools. "I had twisted my ankle earlier and I couldn't get up high enough. I've been working on it for a long time. Fans like to see short people dunk it.

Wansley did not have to worry too much about jumping very high since he claims a nine inch height advantage on teammate Ashford. He notched his stuff only a minute after Ashford reached the same goal.

"I tried to get one the other (Saturday) night, but I couldn't," said Wansley. "I always try to get the dunk because it syches the crowd."

But as Thorpe attested the dunk is not an omnipresent shot. It takes speed and a break to get the chance for what coaches call "the 100 percent shot."