Ashford Feeling Good
As Starter for Tech

Virginia Tech's Marshall Ashford has that good feeling back again. He had it last year, but it was so short-lived he forgot about it.

"It really feels good to be starting every game," Ashford said. "I'm playing a lot better this year than I did last year."

Ashford, when a freshman, was named a starter in Tech's opening game last year. But that was the only game he started. Dave Sensibaugh beat him out for the other 27 games. Now as a sophomore, Ashford has started in all of Tech's first four games.

"I got hurt (a broken finger) after the first game. I didn't play well after that and it hurt my confidence. I felt that if I hadn't been hurt, I could have been a starter."

A big help to Ashford this year is the change in coaches that saw Don DeVoe leave and Charlie Moir come in. The two coaches use different offenses and Ashford fits into the new one better.

"Coach Moir doesn't mind the guards shooting," Ashford explained. "Coach DeVoe didn't have the guards shoot very often. Shooting is one of my strong points. I think I can help more when I can shoot when I want."

The Gobblers lost three starters to graduation in June. Russell Davis, Larry Cooke and Sensibaugh were important to the team last year.

"Last year, Russell, Larry and Dave ran the show. They did a good job of it. I'd say I'm running it this year. As a guard, I should be," Ashford said.

This Saturday the 3-1 Hokies will play 12th-ranked North Carolina in the Roanoke Civic Center. Tech will be using a young team against one of the most disciplined squads in college basketball.

"This is really a big game for us," admitted Ashford. "I thought we played well against them last year, but lost. We'll need to play well again this time."

A trademark of the Tar Heels is their four-corner offense when they have a lead near the end of a game. Ashford, who is from Durham, has seen the four-corner often enough to be familiar with it.

"All you can do is try to play hard against it. You hope your team overplays and you can get a five-second call against one of them. You can't steal the ball unless you're super quick."

While Ashford believes Tech is a quick team, faster than last year, he doesn't think it can take the ball from UNC's four-corner.

"I'd say we're quicker. But we're still trying to feel each other out. We haven't come into our own yet. We'll get better with every game," Ashford said.

— Dennis Latta