Crimson Tide Demolishes Tech Defense

By Staff And Wire Reports

DAYTON, OHIO—Seventh ranked Alabama's basketball team didn't practice like the other three teams in the Dayton Invitational Tournament Friday.

Instead, Coach C.M. Newton's unbeaten Crimson Tide viewed the debut of the new version of the film "King Kong."

What they saw must have rubbed off because the physical Tide fought back from an early first half deficit and stormed back to soundly beat Virginia Tech 108-78 in the tournament championship game Saturday night.

It was Tech's worst defeat since the second game of the 1971-72 season when the Gobblers fell to North Carolina on the road 93-60.

Coach Charlie Moir's Techmen played impressively the first 10 minutes of the game, taking the lead early and holding a 19-12 advantage for the Hokies' biggest lead.

'Bama tied it at 19-all, fell behind 30-23 on tough play by Duke Thorpe and Ernest Wansley, then fought back to tie it twice at 30-30 and 32-32 before freshman Ken Looney's jumper gave the Tide a 34-32 lead.

Two things led to Tech's undoing midway through the first half. Wansley, who was playing well, got into foul trouble and rested on the bench. Plus, Alabama employed a full court press which Tech couldn't handle.

"We lost our composure midway in the first half and committed some turnovers," admitted Moir.

"And we were probably worrying about the officiating," which many of the 11,246 fans on hand objected to what they felt was one-sided calls in favor of the Tide.

"We lost to a good nationally ranked team which is very physical and has great quickness," added Moir.

Tech tried mass substitution of its younger players during a span that Alabama made great strides in the comeback.

"I'd like to play our young people, but I think I found out tonight that I can't substitute them in numbers, perhaps individually," the Gobbler coach commented.

After Looney's go ahead bucket, the Tide broke away on baskets by center Ricky Brown plus scoring from T.R. Dunn and Anthony Murray for a 51-40 cushion by intermission.

Tech had advanced to the game with a narrow one point victory over host Dayton Friday night, while Alabama had gained a finals berth with a victory over Oklahoma State.

The Hokies, now 4-3, realized they had to control the tempo against Alabama in order to win. This is something Tech could not do.

A cold period early in the second half sealed Tech's doom when the Hokies did not score until the 16:25 mark of the half, while Alabama had raced to a 24-point gap at 64-40. During that span the Gobblers had attempted only one field goal in three minutes and missed it.

By the 12 minute mark, Alabama was well on its way to another victory with a 30-point lead, 76-46. The Tide's biggest lead came on two free throws by Brown at the 9:50 mark when Wansley fouled out (32 points at 86-54).

Tech's Thorpe, who made the All-Tournament team, led all scorers in the game with 24, followed by Wansley with 16 and Phil Thieman with 10, the only three Gobblers in double figures.

'Bama's Brown was high for the Tide with 22 points followed by Looney 17, King 16, Dunn 11, and Murray 10.