Virginia Tech Hokies Harness N. Illinois Huskies Monday

By Bill Mears

BLACKSBURG—Virginia Tech, victimized by snow number four-ranked Alabama in its last previous outing, took out its frustrations on the unimpressive Huskies of Northern Illinois 92-55 Monday night at Cassell Coliseum and the Hokie verdict was “We needed that.”

Coach Charlie Moir remarked, “We worked the ball much better than we have ever before. It was our best offensive showing of the season. We just put on them quickly. They sort of fell over as we did in the first half against Alabama. A reporter asked “Was this a confidence builder?” and he replied “Yes, we needed one.”

Hot-shooting freshman reserve Les Henson who led all scorers with 18 points in his 15 minutes of playing time, commented “Everybody was real quiet before the game. We needed to blow them out. That was what happened from the outset. The Hokies started forcefully and the Huskies hardly got started at all. More than eight minutes went by before NIU scored its first field goal after Tech already had 18 points.”

The edge went to 28-14 and later to 40-26 before grabbing the halftime mark of 50-27, but it wasn’t a case of Tech running up the score. Northern Illinois scored poorly on offense and defense. But Tech rebounding and their shooting was about as cold as the wind outside the coliseum.

Starters Duke Thorpe, Ernest Wardley and Marshall Ashford played only 24 minutes and Phil Thompson and Ronnie Bell were in for a minute or two at the reserves accumulated playing experience.

Hudson’s scoring pace showed only a little in the second half as the reserves came up with 43 points while the unimpressive Huskies managed only one point more than they had in the first half.

A total of 13 Hokies played and 11 scored. Joining Henson in double figures were Thorpe (17), Wardley (13) and Ashford (10).

Wardley, continuing the offensive improvement, he first displayed against Ohio State, had a perfect eight-of-six field goals and one for one from the three. Henson hit eight of 10 field goals and Thorpe on seven of 11.

The Hokies’ superlative free throw shooting average, which kept them in the first game of the Dayton Invitational Tournament, continued. Tech hit on 19 out of 20 from the line.

Center John Harris and forward Matt Hicks each had 12 points for the Huskies and were alone in double figures.

Asked to comment on the turnaround, Moir said, “The seniors have shown excellent leadership. This can help you bounce back. I really thought that we played well. Commenting on a long shot taken from outside in a non-pressure situation he said, “When we were getting inside there was no reason to put one in the barrel. I hate to see someone throw up a 25-footer with no one under.”

“This game will be a tremendous help for Les Henson. He is the game we needed going into the tournament (the Times-Dispatch Tournament Dec. 29-30 at Richmond).”

It won’t be easy. We’ll practice Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

Saturday night (in the Dayton tournament finals) when the subs came in we collapsed. It didn’t happen this time. We have a good team.”

“Henson eventually will be a heck of a player for us and so will (Wayne) Robinson.”

Tech’s basketball team is off on a Christmas break and returns to action next week in the tournament at Richmond.

GIFT FOR A FRIEND—Trainer Ed Moltry, one of the more familiar faces in the Tech athletic establishment, happily displays his Christmas gifts from the basketball team.

BELL SHOOTS—Guard Ronnie Bell of the Hokies tries a shot from close range over 6-2 guard Larry Walker of the Huskies.

HERE’S HENSON—Les Henson, who hit on a red hot eight-of-six field goal attempts and made two out of two from the line, grips the ball securely on his way ashift for a score.