Ronnie Edwards Biding Time In VPI Backcourt

BY GARRET MATHEWS

The lefthanded guard for Virginia Tech comes down fast on the break. He sees an opening in the right corner. He takes to more dribbles and goes up for a quick, fallaway jump shot. The ball glides through the nets.

The righthanded guard breaks through a quartet of Northern Illinois players. He goes up for a shot, switches the ball in midair to the left hand and banks a shot in for another Tech basket.

The aforementioned VPI players, Marshall Ashford and Ron Bell respectively, are two reasons Graham's Ronnie Edwards isn't garnering more playing time for the Hokies although the quiet sophomore did play considerably in a third guard role last Monday night in Tech's 92-55 rout of Northern Illinois.

"I thought Ronnie played real well," head coach Charlie Moir said after the game. "I'm looking to find a third guard so we gave him and Scott (Chris, a freshman from Fairfax) a lot of playing time."

Moir said Edwards had a good game against Dayton in that tournament game three days before. "He made a critical three point play down the stretch that gave us a real lift."

Tech won that contest over the Flyers 76-75 in the first round of the Dayton Invitational. Seventh-ranked Alabama bombed the Gobblers 108-78 in the Saturday nightcap in a game in which Moir admitted Tech "got bombed out" in the second half.

Back in the cozy Cassell Coliseum the Hokies quickly bounced back against outclassed NIU. Tech ran up a quick 16-2 lead and it was almost nine minutes into the first half before the Huskies got their first field goal.

Tech has a much quicker team this year than in years past. Every guard Moir inserted in the lineup had more quickness and balance than little men of other seasons. Big men Duke Thorpe, Ernest Wansley and Les Henson (only a freshman) gives Tech much more jumping ability than VPI fans are accustomed to. The return of the dunk gave seniors Thorpe and Wansley more than one opportunity to thrill the crowd.

This aggressiveness was no more evident than in the 40-27 rebounding edge the Hokies had over North Carolina in their recent narrow 81-77 loss at Roanoke.

Edwards took only six shots in the Northern Illinois game and he made one of them. He had no opportunities at the foul line.

Because of Moir's third guard experiment, Edwards probably had as much floor time as anybody on the Tech squad.

The former Southwest District player of the year has changed his style at Blacksburg. It is not in Moir's game plan for him to be a high scorer. When Edwards directed the Tech offense against NIU, his contribution consisted of quickly passing the ball around the Huskie zone until a clear shot opened up for one of the inside men.

Moir is big on the "open shot" concept. His Gobblers are shooting well over 50 percent as a team and high scoring Thorpe is hovering near the 70 percent mark. The head man was most vehement on the bench when sub center Sam Foggin took a 22 footer against the Northern Illinois zone.

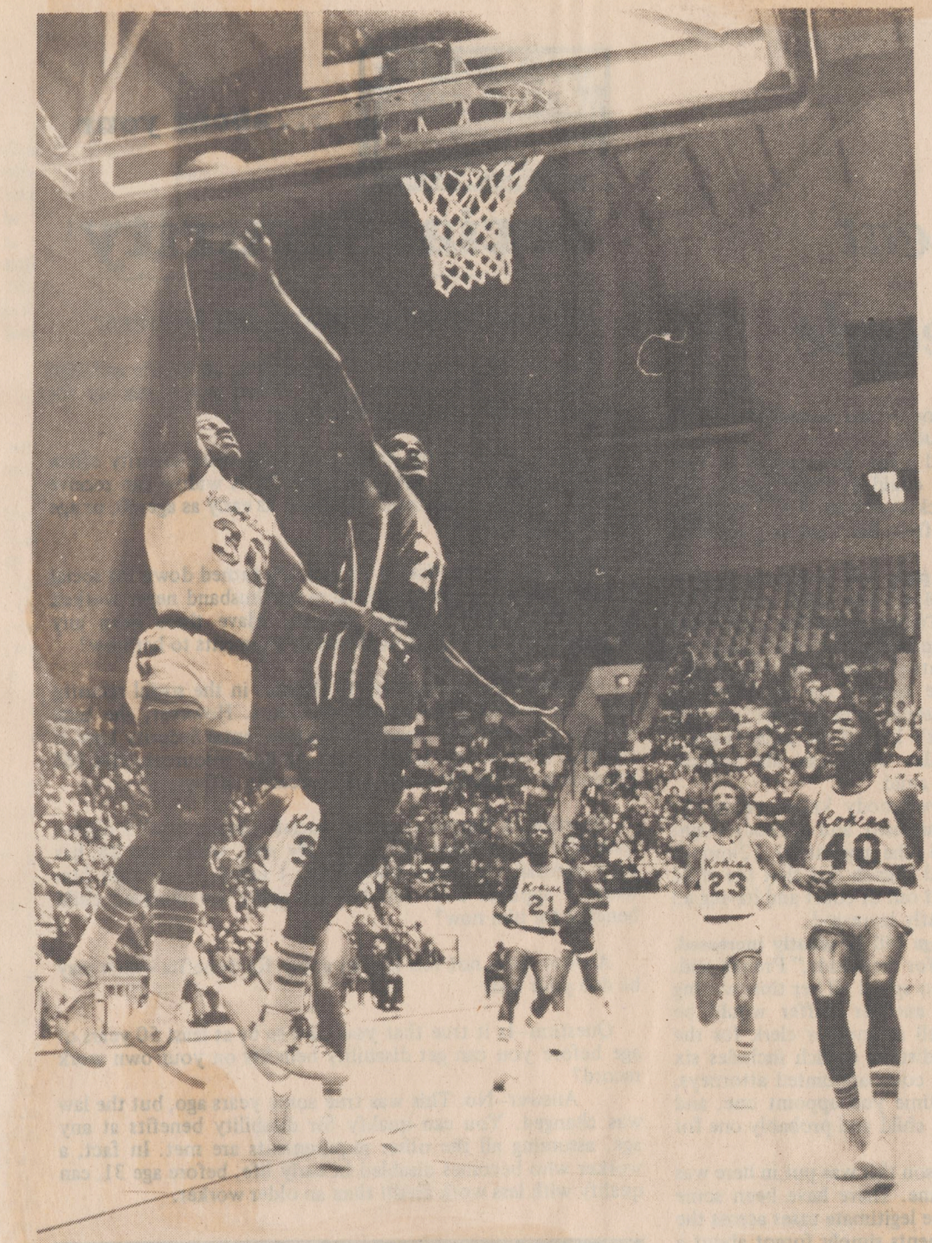
"Sam can hit that shot occasionally when he's unmolested," Moir told the press after the game, "but we can get better shots than that."

Tech has a good team this year.

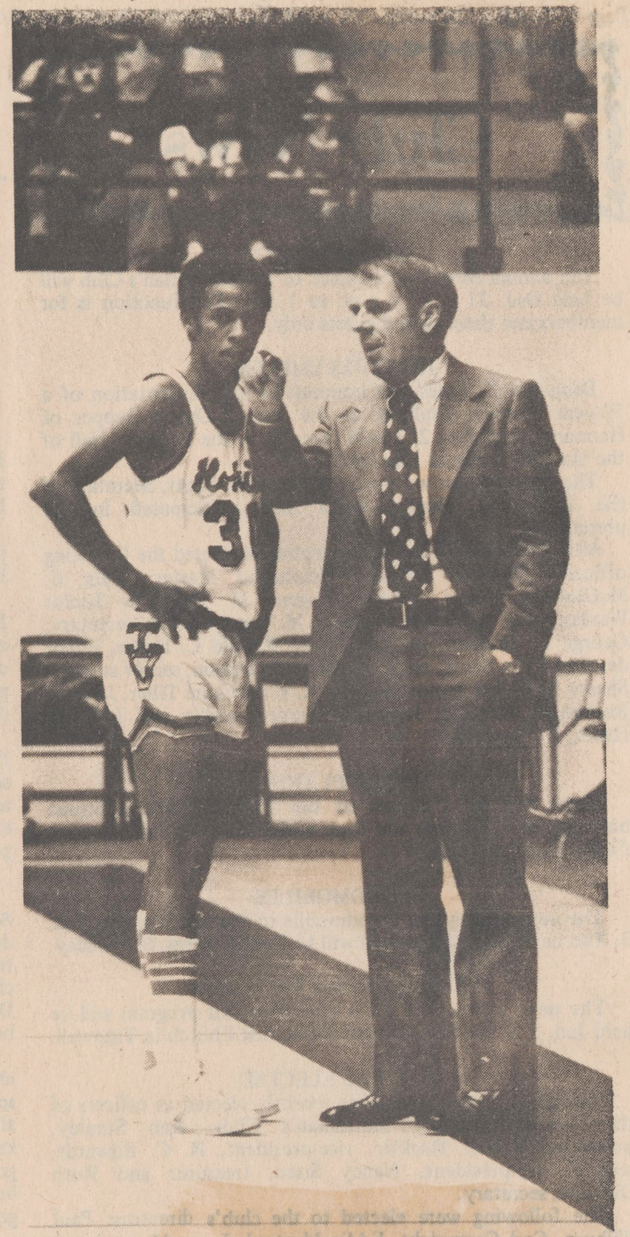
There is much more natural ability on this club than on past VPI quintets. Slowly Virginia Tech is assembling the talent needed to compete with the Big Four in North Carolina.

Unfortunately for Edwards, Tech would seem strongest at the two guard positions. Ashford and Bell are well above average talents. Swing man Phil Thieneman is a consistent if not flashy veteran and the freshman Scott looks like a good one.

Edwards' aggressiveness on defense will help but the John Quintier-Allen Wiley product may well have to be content with spot duty in Hokieland for two more years.



BLOCKED SHOT—Unfortunately, Ronnie Edwards had this shot blocked by a Northern Illinois cager. Against NIU Edwards hit on one of six shots from the floor. (Photos by Mary Anne Stevens)



A LITTLE CHAT—Third guard Ronnie Edwards has a talk with Gobbler coach Charlie Moir.