Hokies' Best Overcomes Cavaliers 65-60

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RICHMOND — After looking sloppy in the first half, Virginia Tech put it together. The Gobblers put it together better than they had in any game this year.

Tech played such a good second half Thursday night that the result was a 65-60 win over Virginia and the championship trophy in the Richmond Times-Dispatch Tournament.

"I thought we were tremendous in the second half. That was the best we have played all year," said Tech Coach Charlie Moir. "Virginia played a super first half. We didn't really play that badly. We just took bad shots."

In the first half, the Gobblers hit only 10 of 28 from the floor (35.7 per cent). At the same time, the Cavaliers were hitting 62 per cent. But UVa had only a 28-24 lead at halftime.

"We had too many turnovers, too many mistakes," said Virginia's Terry Holland. "We've got to handle the ball better. We had a stretch when we turned the ball over and turned it over, without getting a shot."

Virginia should have put the game away in the first half. Tech missed its first six shots. It took the Gobblers more than five minutes to score their first field goal, but the Cavaliers couldn't take advantage. UVa had only a 6-1 lead.

But that was a lead Virginia didn't relinquish through the first half. The biggest it got was eight (20-12) and the smallest it got was one (23-22). But it was Virginia's lead through the first 20 minutes.

Virginia's front line was the reason for the Cavaliers' success. Marc Lavarone (9), Steve Castellan (6) and Otis Fulton (6) were the men doing the scoring for UVa in the first half.

"Our front line played well," observed Holland. "But we didn't get much out of our backcourt. That's the reverse of the problem we've had this season."

But in the second half, Tech played tough defense and shut down the Cavaliers. "We felt that we forced Virginia to take the bad shots we had been taking in the first half," Moir claimed. "We played good defense."

That defense made UVa shoot a poor 38 per cent in the second half. The Cavaliers weren't getting the easy shots they got in the first 20 minutes. Virginia controlled the rebounding, 37-27, but it did no good.

Tech took the lead for the first time, 37-36, with 13 minutes left in the game. The Cavaliers went six minutes without a field goal. During that span, they went from three points up to five behind. It was Tech's game after that with Marshall Ashford, the tournament's most valuable player, eating Virginia offensively and defensively.

Ashford finished the game with 19 points, but he had two steals and four assists. He was the only player on either team to stay in the game for all 40 minutes.

"It was a tremendous effort by Marshall," noted Moir. "This was by far the best game he has played. I can't say enough about him. He contained Langlo. We didn't want Langlo to have a 20-point night."

UVa's Langlo had been instrumental in Wednesday's 65-60 win over VCU. He had seven points against the Gobblers.

Tech also got some help from freshman forward Wayne Robinson. Starter Duke Thorpe was on the floor when the game started, but he was bothered by a groin injury and foul problems. Thorpe wasn't expected to play.

"This morning, we worked out and wasn't able to do anything," Moir explained. "But he loosened up with heat treatment. When he goes out of a game, I think our team tightens its belts."

"Robinson did a tremendous job on defense. He didn't score, but he battled the ball away a couple of times. He did a great job of guarding Lavarone."

The loss drops the Cavaliers to 4-2.