UVa Gets Even With Tech

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HAMPTON — Winning coach Terry Holland wouldn’t come out and say it, nor would the loser, Charlie Moir. In fact, had it not been for Virginia Tech’s Ron Bell, people might still be wondering how Virginia ended a three-game losing streak by beating the Hokies, 55-50, Wednesday night.

“I think we looked at this game the wrong way,” said Bell, who had been the center of some pre-game controversy along with the Cavaliers’ Billy Langloh. “Since we had beaten them, we didn’t really think we had much to prove.

“Virginia did...and that’s why they beat us.”

If that was the game in a nutshell, it also didn’t hurt that the Cavaliers hit 20 of their last 21 foul shots in a contest that was witnessed by 6,956 fans at the Hampton Roads Coliseum.

Earlier, the Hokies had beaten UVa 65-60 in the final of the Richmond Times-Dispatch Invitational and the two clubs meet again Feb. 23 at the Roanoke Civic Center.

Aristically, the Roanoke clash couldn’t help but be better than its predecessor, although it might be hard to surpass for excitement. “I felt,” said Tech’s Moir, “that we were going to win until the last minute.”

If officials Jim Burch and Lou Moser had called either Langloh or Otis Fulton for a crucial foul against Duke Thorpe with 1:14 left, Moir’s feeling would have lasted longer than that.

Down by three points early in the second half, 31-28, the Cavaliers roared back behind alling forward Marc Iavaroni to take a commanding lead, 49-41, with 6:47 to go.

Iavaroni, who scored 15 points and pulled down nine rebounds in just 15 minutes, had fouled out, though, and the Hokies began to whistle at the deficit.

Bell led the charge and it was his driving layup with 1:41 to play that tied it at 49-all. Langloh followed with a pair of foul shots, but the Hokies had the ball back when Marshall Ashford tried to pass inside to Thorpe with just over a minute to go.

Langloh flicked at the ball as it went by and Thorpe never got control, as Fulton gained possession in the shadow of the Hokies’ basket.

“I thought it was a foul,” said Moir, adding characteristically, “but the officials didn’t lose it. We took care of that.”

Fouls did play a big part in the game, however, as Ashford was charged with his fifth foul and Bell, Wansley and Thorpe picked up four, causing them to spend considerable time beside Moir on the Hokies’ bench.

In turn, Iavaroni sat down for good for Virginia at the 7:51 mark, with Fulton joining him six minutes later.

“If you think it was tough sitting down tonight,” said Iavaroni, sidelined by the flu in a 71-65 loss to William and Mary, “how do you think I felt Monday night?”

We really wanted to win this one bad...yes, as bad as any ACC game.”

Indeed, Langloh had said he planned some kind of drastic reaction toward Bell if the Cavaliers won. The confrontation never materialized, with Langloh saying he had proved his point on the court.

“I can’t tell you how it felt there at the end with them chasing us,” he remarked. “We weren’t supposed to be able to handle the ball, but they had to foul us.”

Ironically, it was the Hokies who were suffering the most from ballhandling miscues. Tech committed 17 fouls and 17 turnovers in the first half alone, but the Cavaliers kept it close, shooting just 26 percent (7 of 26).

“A boring stalemate, huh,” said Lavarone, but, actually no more than a couple of points separated the two teams throughout. In fact, had Virginia shot the same way from the line as it did against Williams and Mary (6 of 16 in the first half), it might not have been close—in favor of Tech.

“It shouldn’t be hard for anybody to see that we have no confidence offensively,” said Holland. “It’s carried over to our foul shooting, where we have been shaky to say the least, before tonight.

“IT was really encouraging to see us come around like that.”

With N.C. State, one of the few ACC teams Virginia can realistically hope to beat at this point, looming at University Hall Saturday, the Cavaliers turnaround was not a minute too soon.

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(Staff Photo by Joe Fudge)