Virginia finds ‘inside’ game

BY BOB TEITELBAUM

HAMPTON — Anyone who has been waiting for Virginia’s inside game to find itself can breathe a little easier.

At least for the moment.

The Cavaliers have worried most of the year about their guards and forgotten the tall front line that made them Atlantic Coast Conference basketball tournament champions last year.

But the lesson learned here Wednesday night is that Virginia needs to go inside.

That is what the Cavaliers did and it paid off with a 66-58 win over Virginia Tech to square the three-game series at one win for each team.

The Cavaliers’ starting threesome underanked—Marc Lavareti, Steve Castellan and Mike Owens—won the game by outscoring Tech’s starting big men—Duke Thorpe, Phil Thiemann and Ernest Watts—37-14.

“We were starting to wonder if we weren’t a little short on talent,” said Lavareti, who scored 15 points to lead both teams in scoring.

“We haven’t had a big scorer and we wondered if we would stick together as a team. This (the win) can do nothing but good things for us, though we still have a long way to go.”

Lavareti played just 13 minutes, though a virus that foiled him Monday against William and Mary didn’t bother him. This time the 6-9 forward was doubled by fouls and he went out for good with 7:35 left.

But Tech couldn’t take advantage of the situation. Virginia’s inside game never let up. First, sub center Osa Fulton, sore arm and all, tossed in two free throws.

Then Owens hit a jump shot before Castellan made two free throws as the Cavaliers batted into a commanding 60-44 lead with 6:47 left.

Tech eventually tied the game 48-49 when Ron Bell’s jumper connected from the lane with 1:44 left.

But now Virginia went to the guards as Billy Langish was fouled. He hit both free throws for a 51-49 lead.

That’s when another key inside play settled the game. Tech tried to work the ball to Wanley, but Fulton socked it away.

See VIRGINIA’S, Pg. 26, Col. 1

Virginia’s Bobby Stokes lies on the floor, desperately searching for a teammate who wants the basketball

Virginia’s inside game stops Tech

From Page 25

and the Cavaliers controlled it. This time Bobby Stokes was foiled and the sophomore guard hit two free throws with 44 seconds left to seal Tech’s fate.

There were other things about Virginia’s inside game. It held the high scoring Thorpe to just five points.

“If we’re going to win,” said Castellan, who supported Lavareti with 13 points, “we’re going to have to play good defense. If we held Kenny Carr (North Carolina State scoring leader) to five points Saturday, we’ll win the game.”

Overall, Virginia’s defense dominated the game—something it didn’t do in the first meeting when Tech won 84-60 at Richmond last month.

“Virginia was more hard-nosed than we were,” stated Tech Coach Charlie Moir, admitting the obvious.

“We body-checked their guards,” explained Lavareti. “We didn’t let them get through their cuts like we did at Richmond.”

The strategy paid off as Tech committed 17 turnovers in the first half and 22 for the game.

“We were aggressive on defense, a lot more than we have been,” said Langish.

Then the guard talked some more about moving the ball made. “We tried to get the ball in Lavareti because he was working hard,” said Langish.

“One thing we haven’t been doing is when those guys come across the lane and post open, we wouldn’t get them the ball.”

This game, like the one at Richmond, wasn’t a classic in playing basketball. The second half was much better, but the first half was described by Lavareti as a “scoring intermission” because of a 23-21 tie at intermission.

Thiemann had another description of the first half. “It seemed as if it took 10 hours,” he said.

“We were sluggish. We never could get anything going. We just shot terrible and made too many errors. The only time we looked good was when we ran the ball on them.”

In spite of the slow opening, Stokes said Virginia was fired up for the game.

“Our practices have been bad and people in town were starting to talk about us,” said Stokes. “So we wanted to prove something.”

But maybe Lavareti put the game into its proper perspective.

“I just thought about a three-hour bus ride home after a loss and I couldn’t take it,” he confessed.

That ought to make the rubber match at the Banknotes Civic Center (Feb. 23) more interesting. Both teams will come to that one in a bun also, and for one there will be a long trip home.