Oral Roberts Thumps Slumping Hokies

By DENNIS LATTA
Sports Writer

BLACKSBURG — Virginia Tech's basketball backers got even more proof here Monday night that the Hokies are indeed in a slump—a slump which could prove fatal should it linger much longer.

Had Tech played up to its potential, it could have avoided a 77-59 loss at the hands of a good Oral Roberts team, but instead the Hokies absorbed their third loss in four games.

"If we had played as well as the we could play—as well as we have at times—we could have beaten them," admitted Tech Coach Charlie Moir.

"We just didn't have one of our better games."

ORU came into the game with supposedly a one-man offense in Anthony Roberts. But three quick fouls took care of him. It was without him that the Titans pulled away from Tech in the first half.

Roberts was averaging 31 points a game and Moir knew he was the Titans' big gun. With less than six minutes gone in the game, Roberts headed for the bench with three personals and six points. ORU held an 8-7 lead at the time.

Ten minutes later, the Titans had a 10-point lead and Roberts hadn't moved from his seat on the bench.

"We should have been in control when Roberts got his third foul," observed Moir. "We didn't expect them to do much without him. We expected them to fold, but we folded."

"When Roberts went out, Oral Roberts started looking for five people instead of just one," explained Tech's Phil Thieman, the man who guarded Roberts in the first half. "They just gradually built a lead on us."

By halftime that gradual lead was 13 points, 39-26, and the Hokies were praying their shots would go in. Tech shot a miserable 32 per cent in the first half.

"Coach told us at halftime we were playing terrible," said Duke Thorpe, who along with guard Ron Bell led Tech's scoring with 19 points. "When Roberts went out, we didn't put it to them like we should have."

But Tech didn't recover and die in the second half. In a six-minute stretch, the Hokies outscored the Titans, 19-3, and took the lead, 57-56, with 9:44 on the clock.

Roberts, however, got started for ORU and became the one-man show he's known as. He scored 11 of ORU's last 14 points, despite finishing the game with four fouls. That, however, turned out to be one less than Tech would have liked him to have.

Tech actually outscored the Titans in the second half, 44-38, but the Gobblers couldn't keep up with Roberts when the pressure was on. Thieman was taken off of him and Thorpe tried his hand. Then freshman Les Henson was placed on him. All to no avail.

"He's just really a good jump shooter," Thieman said about the man who scored 23 points in the second half to end with 29. "He protects the ball as he goes up, so you can't hit it. Then, he just kind of hangs there."

"I asked the coach if I could cover him," said Thorpe, "because I didn't like to see him scoring. I was a little tired."

But Roberts wasn't the only man hurting Tech. Guards Arnold Dugger (18) and Lenard Worrall (16) made their contributions.

"If you don't defense them, anybody can score," Moir claimed. "We didn't play good defense."

Tech's slump started over a week ago at St. Bonaventure. In that time, the Hokies have lost to the Bonnies, Virginia and Oral Roberts. Only a win over Jacksonville has prevented a total wipeout for the Gobblers in the last four games.

"We just haven't been as sharp offensively," Moir claimed. "We're not playing with a whole lot of confidence."

"Every phase of our game seems to have broken down at some time," noted Thieman. "In one game, it's defense, in another it's rebounding and then sometimes we don't shoot well."

As a senior, Thieman saw a similar slump by the Gobblers two years ago. "When I was a sophomore, we were 1-6 and things started going bad. We finished 16-10." "I'm hoping we get out of this one soon," Thieman said. "We've just got to keep our heads up."

Tech's Ernest Wansley (50) Scores Over ORU's John Dahms in First Half

Staff Photo By Jack Garing

VA TECH: 77
ORU: 59

ORAL ROBERTS

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