Cavaliers, Gobblers Need More Consistency To Win

Basketball doesn't seem like a complicated game. It's just a simple matter of putting a round ball through a rim more often than the other team.

But this year the college teams in Virginia are showing how difficult it can be to win if the right people aren't scoring.

It has often been said that one-man teams can't win. But the UVa Cavaliers are proving that a team without one man has even less of a chance of winning.

Wally Walker was Virginia's offense last year. When he wasn't doing the scoring, he was being guarded so closely that it allowed the others a freer hand to score. Everyone knew how good he was, but they didn't appreciate how valuable he really was to the Cavaliers.

The collapse of the Cavaliers is total. Their only hope for a win in the ACC this year has to be the game at Duke. But even without Tate Armstrong, the Blue Devils are playing much better than UVa.

Billy Langlois and Otis Fulton were the two players who were going to be counted on to be the consistent scorers for Virginia. Marc Iavaroni is and has been an up and down player. But Langlois and Fulton should have been steady.

Neither of them has come through, however, and Iavaroni has been more down than up. The only bright spot for Virginia has been sophomore Steve Castellan who was playing well until he folded against untalented Delaware.

But Virginia has no one who is going to score well game in and game out. Terry Holland is in for a terrible year because he has no offensive leader.

At Tech, things are different. The Gobblers have some very consistent players. Duke Thorpe, Phil Thieneman and even Ron Bell have preformed well all season. Bell has been stronger lately than when the season started.

But Tech lost three of four games when Bell was hot. While his performances have helped, they haven't made the difference.

Tech's problems during the slump have been the outside shooting of Marshall Ashford and the inside work of Ernest Wansley.

Ashford looked like an all-American in Tech's win over Virginia in the Richmond Times-Dispatch Tournament and was named the MVP for his efforts. In Tech's second game against UVa, Ashford was off and the Gobblers played a terrible game in losing.

Wansley played nose-to-nose against well-known Tommy LaGarde of North Carolina in Roanoke. It looked like he was coming into his own and his hopes of a pro offer might be realized.

But 'Big E' hasn't played well lately. His shooting has been off and he isn't rebounding well. Supposedly, Wansley has been bothered by a knee problem.

On Saturday night, Ashford hit better and Wansley did more rebounding so the Gobblers looked better than they had in two weeks. Charlie Moir runs an offense that calls for the guards to shoot from the outside, especially against a zone, and it needs Ashford to hit. Bell drives well and has been shooting well, but Ashford was expected to be the better pure shooter of the two.

Thorpe is going to hit 60 percent of his shots and Thieneman is going to be guarding the best man on the floor and taking good shots. But Ashford and Wansley have to perform well to give Tech a winning team.

VMI is probably the only team in the state that can win with one or two players not performing well. The Keydets have a chemistry that is unique. They have a balance that can be matched only by Old Dominion.

Will Bynum and Ron Carter are the scoring leaders for VMI. But the Keydets don't depend on just them to win. When a zone is used, guard John Krovic is the man who has to carry the load because of his outside shooting. Reserve George Boroevich might be important then because of his shooting from the corners.

In a man-to-man, Bynum and Carter are going to do much of the scoring, but center Dave Montgomery is carrying more of the offensive load. Montgomery seldom misses because he takes only good shots.

If Jeryl Salmon lies up to his billing, the Keydets can afford to have as many as two players cold on the bench and still have a good team on the floor.

There are still one-man teams around. Clemson goes as Tree Rollins goes. He played a super game against Maryland and the Tigers swamped the Terps. He stunk the place up against North Carolina and Clemson was whipped.

A team like well-disciplined North Carolina even depends on certain people. Phil Ford and LaGade are going to get their points and look good doing it. But Walter Davis might be the pivotal man. He can add an extra demision to the Tar Heel team when he is rolling, and he often is. UNC's only ACC loss came when Davis fouled out with 10 minutes left in the game.

Last year, the one-man or even two-man teams didn't do well in the NCAA. Teams like Virginia and Tennessee ran up against teams that had balance. Even overrated Rutgers had balance and not just Phil Sellers, who was little more than an average player.

Unless Ashford and Wansley play well consistently, Tech can look forward to seeing a zone defense in most games. VMI can expect to see the opposition trying all sorts of defenses and tricks. And unless UVa is allowed to play with six men, the Cavaliers can't expect much of anything, except losing, until a scorer is found.