Hokies Continue Television Jinx; Mountaineers Dominate 86-78

By Mark Kozak

Tech continued to have its troubles on television and against zone defense, as the Hokies dropped their second home contest of the year to the University of West Virginia, 86-78, Tuesday night.

Despite a sterling offensive performance by senior Phil Thieneman, and some inspired play by freshman Les Henson, Tech could not overcome a six point half time deficit and bowed to the Mountaineers for the second time.

Thieneman's 24 points could not counter the combined 47 point bombardment of West Virginia center Maurice Robinson and guard Tony Robertson.

While Robertson bombed from the outside, Robinson hit layups and slam dunks, many on the end of breakaway fastbreaks.

Henson, who spent 13 minutes of the game subbing for sickly Ron Bell, and sick playing Duke Thorpe, played well defensively, but had to sit out early in foul trouble, and finally fouled out with a little over a minute to go.

Head coach Charlie Moir said Bell had been sick for the past day, and should not have been playing at all. He also commented on Thorpe's play.

"Duke played badly defensively, and didn't move on offense," Moir said. "He just had a bad game."

But Moir felt the key to the game was in the first minutes of the first half. "We got out hustled," he explained. "For the first 8 to 10 minutes, we were not playing aggressively. West Virginia played good defensively, and also played well on offense."

Moir's second point was based well in fact and statistics. The Mountaineers shot 58 percent in the first period, 59 percent for the game. Meanwhile, the Hokies shot only 45 percent before intermission, and 48 percent for the game.

Tech led three times in the contest, the last at 12-10 with 15:17 remaining in the first period. The Mountaineers allowed a tie at 24-24 with 7:55 left, but never let up again. They outscored Tech 14-8 in the last seven minutes to take a 38-32 halftime advantage, and the Hokies never came closer.

"We didn't play with intensity early in the game," Moir said. "It's happened to us a few times before, and we've come back and played better but not this time.

"We were taking the 18-22 footers and not converting. We didn't get good penetration to get the ball inside," he said.

The Mountaineers didn't give the Hokies a chance to come back in the second half. They outscored Tech 10-2 in the first three minutes to take a 14 point lead, which they held on to for most of the rest of the game.

The lead rose to as much as 16 points on three different occasions before the Hokies were able to cut it to 9 with six minutes to go.

A chance to cut in to 7 failed when Sam Foggin missed from the center with six minutes to go. The Mountaineers rebounded and West Virginia's Robinson connected on a three point play and a breakaway slam dunk to ice the game.

A Mountaineer slowdown from that point on was successful in running off enough time to put the game out of reach.

"We were trying to play a tight man-to-man and get the 5-second call or an interception," Moir said in explaining why the Hokies did not try to foul. "But we had some guys laying back."

In an interesting sidelight to the game, a mysterious friend of the officials, who drove down with them, was hugging the West Virginia players after the game. Moir followed officials Jim Pinkerton (ACC) and Gene Sterator (Tri-State) down the Coliseum hallway to their dressing room where they ushered the friend in.

"I didn't think that was very ethical," Moir said, "and I told them so." Moir added that he told them he thought they didn't give Tech any breaks.

In addition to Robinson and Robertson, the Mountaineers were led by Russell Chapman with 16 points Sid Bostick with 10, and Bob Huggins 10.

Thieneman had help from Thorpe's 17, Ernest Wansley's 14, and Henson's 9. The Hokies had the rebounding edge 32-31, and committed less turnovers 14-15.