Down 25, Hokies Beat Memphis State

By Mark Koaak

Ron Bell led an amazing second half Virginia Tech comeback, scoring 24 points including two free throws with 0.6 remaining to defeat Memphis State University 70-69.

Bell, who had shouldered several pressure situations this year, turned in a perfectly silencing Cassell Coliseum crowd into pandemonium with the first of two free throws that hit nothing but net and tied the game at 69.

Memphis State called a time out to shake up the junior college transfer from Cayuga Junior College in Albany, N.Y., but he stepped to the line, and calmly canned the second free throw. This one was not so clean as it danced on the rim, but none-the-less, a perfect effort in giving Tech the game.

The 70-69 lead was the third of the game for the Hokies, who also led 2-0 and 13-12 early in the first half. In between, the Hokies played some of their worst and best basketball of the season on the way to one of their most shocking comebacks in sixteen years.

In 1965, the Hokies made up 18 points in nine minutes to edge Vanderbilt in the Gator Bowl 79-78. For you trivia fans, the Hokies lost in the finals of that tournament to the University of Florida 79-78.

But that is history, while the Hokies' twenty-five point comeback is still vividly on the minds of the 6000 delirious fans.

Following the trend of their coach, but it took them a few minutes to show it. At 17-42 of the second period, the Hokies were down by their largest margin 49-23, and had nothing but free throws until Marshall Asdford hit his first shot of the game with 15 minutes to go.

A full court pass against the Tech press sealed out of bounds, and Thieneman cut the lead to three at 1:18.

The Hokies were forced to foul to get the ball back at this point. The Tiger they picked was little Audin Wright, who was already 0 for 2 from the line. The crowd didn't help Wright up all, and the man who had bombed in thirty-footers from the field could not cope with the pressure.

The Hokies pulled down the missed shot, and Bell again hit from five feet, Tech steeled the ensuing inbounds pass, but this time Bell missed a layup in heavy traffic.

Tech caught up with Wright again with 20 remaining, and again Bell hit a fifteen footer to cut the lead to 69-64, and Tech called timeout at 1:26 to go.

The crowd is back as Tech made a comeback in biggest show of enthusiasm all year.

Bell (22) avoids Isbell (34) in second half comeback action.