Incredible Comeback Saves Tech

By JERRY RATCLIFFE
Senior Sports Editor

The game had already been over nearly 20 minutes. But Charlie Moir was still riding the emotional high of perhaps the most stirring comeback in Virginia Tech basketball history. Down by as many as 25 points at one time, and trailing by 11 with two and a half minutes to play, Moir's Hokies stormed back to stun nationally-ranked Memphis State 70-68 Wednesday night in Cassell Coliseum.

"I don't believe it," the veteran Moir mumbled, while still wiping away perspiration with his hanky. It was the kind of performance that left many Tech followers "rubber-legged" after the emotion-fueled comeback.

"It was just an unbelievable win," said Moir between deep breaths. "I'll be honest with you, I didn't think it would happen."

It was the biggest comeback by a Hokie squad since the 1961-62 season when the Techmen trailed Vanderbilt by 18 with nine minutes to go, but came back to win 70-68, with Tech advancing to the finals of the NCAA tournament.

The Hokies, ranked 25th in the nation until entering home to nationally-ranked Louisville and Cincinnati, were led by the great James Bradley with 16 of the half, while Dexter Reed had pumped in nine and John Washington eight.

The Hokies had trailed by 54 in the first half at 65-19, had committed 22 turnovers and shot their worst percentage in one half this season (only 27 percent of 54 attempts).

Moir admitted he was probably more sore during the halftime than any other on record. "I told him to get back into the game. He was acting like he was playing in the 11th century and it was the 21st century."

The first half we just stuck up the place. If we had played the whole game like that we would have to get the coliseum fumigated tomorrow.

"We just wanted to get back and save ourselves from total embarrassment," Moir revealed.

"I thought at that point we had two or three opportunities to get closer," said Moir. Actually the two teams missed their next nine shots, before the Tigers' Steve Meachum hit his only basket of the night to give MSU some breathing room with a 31-40 advantage and 7:41 to go.

With three minutes left and holding a 57-48 lead, Memphis State tried to hold off the Orange, offensive and made it 68-59 on a pair of Bradley free throws, with 2:35 showing.

Foggins scored, then picked up a loose ball after MSU's final basket to pass the full-length 40.

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Today

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Photo By Gene Delano

Gobblers' Duke Thorpe (33) Strains To Hold Off Tiger Opponent

Memphis State's Steve Meacham (35) Looks For Place To Go

Photo By Gene Delano

* Comeback

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Jerron's game-winning shot, cut the ball at the 9th.-

length of the court, trying to get the ball. After picking up the ball, he draped off to Rim Bell who scored, cutting it 49-

64.

After a Memphis State traveling violation, Bell scored on a perimeter jumper. It was 80-64 with 1:25 showing.

Another long basketball pass went off the hands of a Tiger player and out of bounds.

This time it was Phil Thieman who scored on a jumper, making it 89-66 at 1:15 left.

Tech trailed MSU's Alvin Wright, who is only a 46 percent free throw shooter, and who had previously missed two free shots of the line earlier. He missed the front end of a one and one and Tech rebounded Bell scored on a drive, cutting it to one point. Tech called time with 1:10 seconds. Final ball pressure forced another of 13 Memphis State turnovers on the inbounds pass, but Bell's drive flashed.

Little hope remained. Bell, notorious for his sometimes faulty free throw shooting, but erratic enough to pull some games out with his scoring from the line, sank both shots for an incredible 76-

99 lead.

Photo By Gene Delano

Virginia Tech Guard Ron Bell (22) Fouled On Way Up

Memphis State's Center John Washington Is Culprit.