Hokies Blitz Army Defense

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Virginia Tech scored at will in the first half against a highly vaunted Army defense, and then withstood a late second half rally to beat the Cadets 80-74 Saturday night in Cassell Coliseum.

Army, which had allowed only 62 points a game before the Saturday encounter and was one of the nation's leaders in that category, found it particularly tough to stop the Hokies' Duke Thorpe, who scored 17 of his 24 points in the first half.

In winning its 15th game of the season and third straight, Tech jumped out front early. Turning numerous Army miscues into relatively easy fast breaks, the Hokies opened up an 18-point lead at 26-8 in the first ten minutes of play.

The series of fast breaks were important in that Army is a team that likes to slow the ball down. Without the lead, the strategy was useless.

"I was surprised we got so many fast breaks early in the game," Tech Coach Charlie Moir commented. "They have a well disciplined offense that usually slows it down. If the ball game had been close early, it would have been one hell of a ball game."

As it turned out, most of the Army offense was in the form of one Gary Winton, who finished as the game's high point man with 28 points. The 6-6 forward, who played the middle chipped in 14 in the first half, with all coming from five feet or closer. Despite Winton, the Cadets could do little. The Army offense continually tried to go inside against the taller Hokies. The results were less than successful as many passes were either stolen, or simply thrown away. The Cadets commited 16 turnovers in the first half.

"The reason we take it inside is that we want to get the ball to Winton," explained Cadet Coach Mike Krzyzewski. "When we can't get it to him, or he's out of the game, it hurts us.

The Cadets got as close as 16 points in the first half on a basket by Cinnie Brundidge with two minutes left, but a lay-up by Earnest Wansley and two buckets by Thorpe iced the lead back to 18, leaving the score at halftime, 43-27.

The second half became nothing more than a parade to the foul line as play turned spastic and each team committed 16 fouls.

"We had some sloppy execution in the second half," Moir said. "We started standing around on defense, and when that happens, there's going to be a lot of fouls. We took control of the game early, but then we got tired and sloppy and almost let them back in it."

What the Hokies did to let Army back into the game was go almost four minutes without a basket as Army cut a 19 point Tech lead to ten at 71-61. Army stayed within ten until there were only four minutes left. Thorpe hit a three point play, followed by a basket by Marshall Ashford. Seconds later Winton was called for a charging foul, which was his fifth, and the game was over for all practical reasons.

"Our kids played much better in the second half," said Krzyzewski, "but we didn't handle their full court press the way we've handled it in the past. I thought we could take advantage of it a lot better."

Moir on the other hand was displeased with his team's play in the final stanza. "I was disappointed with our style of play in the second half," the coach noted. "We threw a lot of soft passes and made a lot of turnovers."

One of the more unusual plays of the game occurred midway through the second half. Army's Larry Cauficil apparently went over to ask the official a question, and was instead answered with two technical fouls. What did he say?

"All he said to the official was that he had lost his contact lens and that he would like to play to be stopped for him to look for it," said Krzyzewski, who will not see TECH, Pg. 11

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allow any of his players to talk to the press. "He had no business talking to him anyway, because no one of this team talks to the officials except me or Winton, who is the team captain." In talking with the officials, Krzyzewski himself got a technical in the first half.

Despite the big lead Tech held throughout most of the game, the Hokies would not let themselves relax, remembering what happened against Memphis State Wednesday night when the Hokies overcame a seemingly insurmountable 25 point lead in the second half.

"We started to let up a bit in the second half," noted Wansley. "But you really can't against this bunch. These guys just don't know when to quit. They just keep coming at you."

TECH'S PHIL THIENEMAN (44) HANGS IN AIR DURING LAYUP AGAINST ARMY SATURDAY NIGHT

The Cadets' Cinnie Brundidge (52) Attempts To Draw A Charge On The Play