A small victory
for Gobbler sub

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BLACKSBURG — The crowd hushed in anticipation of one of the highlights of the season. The player at the foul line had missed his chance. He had only one more.

He dribbled the ball once or twice, then put it up. It went in and the crowd gave a long, loud standing ovation. Keith Helgeson could only smile.

Helgeson had a very small part to do with Virginia Tech's 122-70 rout of Birmingham Southern Monday night. But Helgeson was the man the fans were pulling for. Several weeks ago, he missed two foul shots in the closing seconds that would have put Tech over 100 points against another outmanned team.

Monday night's free throws had no affect on the outcome of the game. The Gobblers were ahead, 119-68, at the time.

"I was just thinking that I had better make this one," said Helgeson about his second shot.

That foul shot gave the sophomore from New Jersey a grand total of three points this year. "I made one field goal. I just shot without thinking about it."

Helgeson is a walk-on. He is not on scholarship and plays only after all doubt about the outcome of the game is over. "I think this is the eighth game I've been in."

It isn't that Helgeson is a bad player. He, along with walk-ons Steve Merviweather and John Byers, just aren't good enough. When they're put in the game, the crowd just wants them to score some points. The pressure is on them.

"I'm not a klutz in practice," Helgeson said. "If I could get up and play the game, I'd be alright. But I'm so excited when I finally get a chance to get in that I don't play well."

Helgeson would rather sit on the bench of 16-7 Tech than go some place he could play more. "The caliber of basketball is good here. I could probably play at some small school, but that's not what I want to do."

Monday night against Birmingham Southern, Tech had to blame one man for anything. The Gobbler had total control of the game from the tipoff. The first team dominated the Panthers, so the second team was sent-in. The second five also ripped BSC, 93-86.

Everything the Hokies threw up went in. They shot 58 per cent for the night, almost doubled the Panthers in rebounding.

It was one of Tech's best exhibitions of the season.

But Tech needed a boost in its confidence. The Hokies play at Ohio University Wednesday and then finish their season with Virginia and two nationally ranked teams in Wake Forest and Marquette.