Marquette Ends Plucky VPI Hopes For Tourney In 75-70 Triumph

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BLACKSBURG—Virginia Tech's last flicker of hope for a post-season basketball tournament berth was blown out by nationally-ranked Marquette Saturday night.

The Warriors, on the other hand, remained in the race for their sixth consecutive trip to the NCAA playoffs by downsing the Gobblers 75-70 before some 10,000 fans.

The Gobblers, who had knocked off two other ranked clubs the past month — Wake Forest and Memphis State — looked as if they might pull a "hat trick" after leading most of the first half.

With 1:07 remaining before intermission, 6-foot-5 senior Bo Ellis sank two free throws to put the victors up for good at 32-30.

In the second half, Olympian Butch Lee and 6-10 junior Jerome Whitehead scored 14 and 11 points, respectively, to keep the Warriors a step or two ahead of the gallant-fighting hosts all the way.

The Gobblers, finishing the regular season with a 18-9 record, trailed by only 65-63 after senior Phil Thieneeman connected on a field goal with 3:51 left to play.

After that, however, the Techmen's play-off hopes vanished as they managed to hit only one more field goal and missed two of five free throw opportunities.

Marquette, ranked as high as No. 2 in the country earlier this season but No. 18 now, hiked its record to 18-6, with games still remaining against Tulane, Creighton and Michigan.

"It was a disappointing loss, but the kids played hard and gave a tremendous effort," said first-year Head Coach Charlie Moir. "They are an excellent ball club and did the best job of

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IN LOSING FINAL-GAME EFFORT

VPI's Thorpe, Thieneeman Excel

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anyone we've played in boxing out and hitting the boards hard."

That was reflected in the statistics where Marquette posted a 43-33 rebounding advantage.

Field goal shooting, however, probably told the tale better. Marquette — the No. 5 team in the country defensively — made it a lackluster night of marksmanship for the Gobblers. They found the range on only 27 of 66 attempts for 40.9 per cent to 28 of 58 for 48.3 for the winners.

Marquette Coach Al McGuire, now putting the final touches on a masterful coaching career, lauded the Gobblers for their effort.

"Their shots just weren't falling at the end," he noted. "I think they belong in the ACC. When you beat a team like Wake Forest at their place, you've done a day's work."

Whitehead, though fouling out with 6:34 left to play and his mates on top 61-57, emerged the game's leading scorer with 22. He also haked in five rebounds.

Rommates Thieneeman and West Point product Duke Thorpe, playing their final collegiate game, triggered the Gobblers with 19 and 16, respectively.

Thorpe would have had a more productive night but he saw less than five minutes of action in the first half after being slapped with three quick fouls.

Two other Tech starters found themselves in foul trouble, too, before halftime — guard Ron Bell and 6-10 senior center Ernest Wansley. Towards the end of the first half, the Gobblers had only one starter in the lineup, guard Marshall Ashford.