Alabama Sets Stage For Va. Tech Repeat

From Staff and Wire Dispatches

Like a page out of the history books, Virginia Tech will be playing Alabama Monday night in the quarter-finals of the NIT in New York's Madison Square Garden.

The Crimson Tide had an easy time in defeating Memphis State, 80-63, Thursday night in a first-round game. In other first-round games, Massachusetts nipped Seton Hall, 86-85, and St. Bonaventure beat Rutgers, 79-77, in overtime.

Four years ago, Alabama was a strong favorite to win the NIT. The Crimson Tide, which is ranked No. 12 in the nation this week, lost to Tech, 74-73, in the 1973 NIT semifinals.

This year, Alabama will be an even stronger favorite. The Gobblers were whipped by the Crimson Tide, 108-78, in the championship of the Dayton Tournament in December.

Tech won the right to go to New York by beating Georgetown, 83-79, Wednesday night in Tech's Cassell Coliseum.

Reginald King popped in 26 points and helped turn a close game into a rout for Alabama against Memphis State. With 15 minutes left in the game, the Tide had a slim 45-44 lead. But Alabama walked away from there.

Don Bowerman, Anthony Murray and King combined to take charge with Alabama's pressing defense and ball thievery bothering the Tigers.

James Bradley led Memphis State with 14 points while Alvin Wright had 12 and Rodney Lee 10. Ricky Brown got 16 and Bowerman 11 for the Tide.

Monday night, Illinois State and Houston will play each other. Both teams won by a point in their first-round games. Times have not been announced, but because Alabama is nationally ranked, the Tech-Alabama game will probably be played at 9 p.m.

The two other quarter-final games will be played Tuesday night. Villanova, an overtime winner over Old Dominion, will play Oregon, while Massachusetts takes on St. Bonaventure.

The semifinals of the tournament will be in Madison Square Garden Friday night with the championship and a consolation game planned for Sunday afternoon.

Massachusetts scored the winning basket against Seton Hall with just five seconds left in the game when guard Alex Eldridge dribbled the length of the court, then fed center Mark Donoghue.

Donoghue's basket, which gave him 26 points for the game, came just 10 seconds after Nick Galas had hit a 10-footer to put Seton ahead for the first time in the second half.

Guard Glenn Hagan scored at the buzzer in overtime to give St. Bonaventure its win. Hagan scored 15 of his 21 points in the second half and overtime as the Bonnies raised their record to 21-6.

Trailing 37-30 at halftime, the Bonnies went ahead 48-47 with 15 minutes left in the game. Neither team took much of a lead from that point, but Rutgers center James Bailey hitting a basket with 22 seconds to go in regulation time, forcing the game into an extra period.

With the score tied at 77-all with 15 seconds remaining in the overtime, Hagan got the ball on an in-bounds pass and hit his winning 15-footer as the buzzer sounded.

Essie Hollis was high scorer for St. Bonaventure with 25 points. Rutgers ends the year 18-10.