Foggin’s Sky-Hook Belongs in Cookout

Noting college sports:
While they may have felt a bit differently that had been Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on the floor at Cassell Coliseum, Virginia Tech’s basketball coaches still aren’t sure what to think about Sam Foggin’s antics in the NIT opener against Georgetown Wednesday night.

To set the scene — Foggin was making one of his frequent substitute appearances for Ernest Wansley with Tech leading 67-61 and trying to protect its lead with seven minutes left. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Foggin came charging across the lane and put up a 10-foot sky hook that hit nothing but the bottom of the net.

Head Coach Charlie Moir and his assistants rose as one to chastise their free-spirited center, only to sink back in their seats, stunned as the shot went in. At the same time, Georgetown Coach John Thompson kept to his feet to rally his charges, only to realize he didn’t have anything to say.

Sitting in the stands, scouting the talent at the state tournament in Charlotte, Tech assistant Frankie Allen admitted that maybe Foggin could have found a better time and place to try his sky hook. “Like at a July 4th cookout,” grinned Allen, “when the other guy has H-O-R-S-E.

If nothing else, the shot enhanced the Sam Foggin mystique. “He’s made a couple of those this season,” said Moir, “but, oh no, that’s not the shot we wanted.” Moir had been confounded earlier this week when he called Foggin to report that Tech had been accepted for an NIT bid, at which point Foggin said he was so excited he was going jogging...at 11 o’clock at night.

One of the real surprises of the evening came after the game when Thompson visited the referees’ quarters to thank them for a well-officiated game. “I’m a referee bater from way back and, usually, I’m the first one to gripe about officials when I lose,” said Thompson, “but those two guys did a great job.”

Actually, it should not have been surprising that Big Ten refs Bob Wortman and Darwin Brown gave a good account of themselves. “What would you expect,” said Roanoke’s Julian Fulcher, an alternate for the first-round NIT game. “Wortman’s only done the national finals the last two years.”

Hokies Wait on Ratiff

Although it appears that ACC letter-of-intent day will pass without any fanfare today, there is every indication that 1977 could be a banner recruiting year, at least as far as Virginia Tech is concerned.

The Hokies are still in it with James Ratiff, the 6-8 forward from Eastern High School in Washington, who is considered one of the top prospects in the country. Craig Watts, the 7-0 center from New England, has apparently narrowed his choices down to VPI, Clemson and a few others, while Dexter Reid from Massanutten should qualify academically this year.

It has been said that Reid is considering Old Dominion but Moir says he will be surprised if the guard from Norfolk doesn’t sign with Tech and, if he doesn’t do it early. “As for Ratiff, I’ll be shocked if he signs tomorrow (Saturday),” said Moir. “He wants to use up all his visits and, as of now, he has one to make. I still think we’re leading with him.”

Since Watts and Ratiff (who is also being courted by Maryland) are the only players Tech for whom Tech is battling with ACC schools, today’s deadline is relatively significant. “April 13 is the big day,” said Moir of the national letter day. “I’ll be nervous if we don’t have four or five by then.”

By nature, Virginia is more close-mouthed about its recruiting, but the Cavaliers have had one player to visit — 6-5 forward Kenny Hall from Atlanta — and are talking to several other top prospects.

One of those is 6-9 Mike Budko, the top prep player in Baltimore who has said he will go ACC. Terry Holland and his staff reportedly are also heavy in their pursuit of 6-2 Max Perry, one of the best guards in the country from Hanover, Ind. As for Budko, talent scout Howie Garfinkel claims that, “When you say Bud, you’ve said it all.”

The only first-day signees should be Gene Banks and Kenny Dennard, who have already made commitments to Duke. The Blue Devils are also being considered by 6-4 swingman Jeff Lamp from Louisville, one of the best prospects in the country, and 6-6 Kelly Tripucka from New Jersey.

Although he never made a visit, Virginia felt it had a good chance at Banks, who was recruited by assistant coach Cliff Littlepage. Holland has been able to recruit good talent for the Cavaliers but Banks would have been a real coup. “He just won’t sell his soul to a 17-year-old kid,” observes Davidson SID Emil Parker, who worked with Holland for several years. Retorts Holland, “I just haven’t found one good enough yet.”

Dennis Doughty

Doug Doughty

Got a good arm and a couple years eligibility left? The UVA football program may be able to use you. With the Cavaliers’ spring practice half over, nobody has emerged as starting quarterback material, with senior Wally Marcus holding the No. 1 job at present. Less of a problem exists at running back, where transfer Paul Izlar continues to impress. Holdovers Skip Browning and Vince Mattix (formerly a defensive end) are running 1-2 at fullback.

Speaking of transfers, it was just typical of Virginia’s basketball season when guard Tommy Hicks, who played two years at Tulane, broke his foot...And, speaking of injuries, Salem’s Mike Brancuti has missed most of spring drills at Virginia after suffering a split finger...Cave has signed No. 23 for football wide receiver George Spady from Newport News.

While there were several snickers when Davidson applied for re-admittance to the Southern Conference and was accepted, it could have been a quite a break for the conference. While the Wildcats’ Division II football program isn’t much to brag about, they do have an important voice in NCAA affairs. Dr. Tom Scott. As long as it has Scott on its side, the SC will be assured of an automatic post-season basketball bid.

Finally, when Sidney Snell scored 41 points against Dan River, it was quickly pointed out that he broke the state Group AA playoff record of 34. What people failed to mention was that he broke the record at any level, 38 by Jeff Early of Madison in 1974.

Who’s Jeff Early, you might ask? Well, Early was the 11th man for Roanoke College as a walk-on this season and was last seen arguing in vain — before the school senate that the Maroons should remain Division II.