‘Things got away from us’—Tech’s Moir

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NEW YORK — Charlie Moir was philosophical as he usually is—in victory or in defeat.

"Too much one-on-one," said the Virginia Tech coach.

It was that simple for Moir to sum up the 79-72 loss to Alabama at Madison Square Garden Monday night in the National Invitation Tournament quarterfinals.

"We didn’t get it (the ball to Ernest Wansley) and Duke-Thorpe) inside in the second half," Moir continued. "This is when patience pays off," said Moir, "and you get the ball where you want it."

The loss also ended the first season of Moir at Tech. His club finished a more than respectable 19-10 and made it to a post season tournament. There were some people who doubted that Tech, which was stripped by graduation, could achieve this kind of season.

Still, Alabama showed some of the flaws that kept the Gobblers from being among the nation’s elite basketball teams.

"I really thought we were as quick (as Alabama)," said Tech guard Ron Bell, who played well in defeat 18-33 points.

"But we passed the halfway point of the second half and Alabama put in a small lineup. We got out of our offense and started forcing some of our shots.

All this happened after Tech roared out to a 57-48 lead. Robert Scott and Kent Looney became big factors for the Tide. They came off the bench and scored all of their 14 points in the last 20 minutes to spark a devastating ‘Bama attack.

Alabama outscored Tech 17-3 in seven and a half minutes to go on top 66-60. The Gobblers were also in foul trouble with four regulars saddled with four personal fouls each and Bell holding at three.

Though Tech eventually cut the margin to one, a three-point play by Anthony Murray with 4:37 left made it 70-64 for ‘Bama and, for all practical purposes, ended Tech’s bid.

"I think our guards turned this game around," said Crimson Tide center Ricky Brown, who wasn’t the dominant factor he usually is.

"We applied more man-to-man full-court pressure. Usually our guards break games open. We sometimes sit back and wait on our guards," Murray agreed and said the play of Scott and Looney was the difference.

"We have a lot of confidence in our freshman guards and we use them to keep pressure on the entire game. I think at the first Tech was more physical than us and it might have psyched us out," said Murray.

Indeed, Tech was tough in the first half. Wansley was awesome inside with 10 points in the opening 20 minutes. Thorpe had six rebounds and Tech owned a 17-16 advantage on the boards over the Tide.

But in the second half, statistics told a different story. Moir just sat and looked at the box score that showed a dismal Tech performance in shooting. The Gobblers finished at 31 per cent the last half after making 18 of 34 before intermission.

"We played a great first half," said Moir, "probably our best half of the year. Things got away from us in the second half."

Most people for Tech, though, were satisfied with the first season under Moir. Even the players were pleased with the outcome after the bizarre ending last year when Don DeVoe was not rehired and Moir swept in from Tulane.

"We were aware people thought we couldn’t win 19 or 20 games and go to the NIT," said Thorpe. "They thought it would be a break even season, but we proved them wrong."

Sam Faggin, who backed up Wansley and came on strong the last few weeks of the season, said change from Moir to DeVoe wasn’t that difficult.

"Really," said the 6-9 junior, "college coaches run about the same things now. Coach Moir took the best five and tried to mix in the bench to win games. That was the same as Coach DeVoe."

But maybe Thorpe summed it up best.

"This," he said, "is the best team I’ve been associated with."

Thorpe meant something other than quality considering that last year’s Tech squad won 21 games and went to the NCAA.

"Yeah, for four years, on the court and off the court, this team was the closest. We always talked our problems out," he said, explaining his statement about this being the best Tech team.

In the nightcap on the opening program, Houston thrashed a great Illinois State comeback to win 91-90 in overtime.

Illinois State trailed by 14 points at half and tied the game 81-81 when freshman Ron Jones hit two free throws with a second left. A sea-caw overtime was settled with All-American Otis Birdsong hit a jumper with six seconds remaining to wipe out a Cougar one-point deficit.

**Sports**

Associated Press

Tech’s Duke Thorpe blocks shot of Alabama’s Kent Looney