



Bell

Bell Latest Harvest From JUCO for Tech

By Mike Bevans

Junior college transfers have played a major role in the success of Virginia Tech basketball in recent years. Bobby Stevens (Ferrum), Charlie Thomas (Ferrum), Russell Davis (Louisburg), Larry Cooke (Mt. Olive) and Ernest Wansley (Anderson) have been key two-year performers in the past four years.

During that stretch, the Hokies won 72 and lost 35, captured an NIT title and gained an NCAA tournament berth.

When Virginia Tech meets the University of Richmond in the second game of the opening round of The Times-Dispatch Invitational Tournament tomorrow night at the Coliseum, the Hokies will have a pair of JC products in their starting lineup — Wansley, a senior center, and Ron Bell, a junior guard.

The latest JUCO performer to enlist for a two-year stint in Blacksburg, Bell is a 6-1, 150-pounder, who led his conference with a 31-point scoring average for Cayuga County J.C. in Albany, N.Y. The Hudson, N.Y., native already has made a place for himself in the Hokies' starting lineup.

HOWEVER, BELL HAS gained a regular's role without gunning for the hoop. In fact, he is the only starter not averaging in double figures. While hitting just under 50 per cent of his field goal tries, Bell still is averaging only 9.3 points an outing.

"I used to shoot more, but here there are good people inside like Duke (Thorpe) and Ernest (Wansley) and I'm trying to pass more," explained Bell. "There are a lot more big people in major college ball and I can't take it to the hoop as much, either.

"We didn't have any real big people in junior college, the biggest was 6-5 my freshman year. We had a pretty good team, but some of the players flunked out or dropped out, so I had to shoot a lot. Now, I'm working together with a team."

Bell has been paired in the backcourt



with Marshall Ashford, a sophomore almost identical in size — 6-2, 160. Bell sees no problem with two guards so closely matched in the same backcourt.

"Marshall is a good ballplayer and he helps me a lot on defense," said Bell. "He has to play a big guard sometimes, but he can really jump and makes up for it. We talk a lot out there and if we have to go down low, we get Phil (Thieneman, 6-5 swingman) to help us."

BELL WAS A late find by Tech coach Charles Moir, who succeeded Don DeVoe

Tourney Tickets At the Coliseum

All remaining ticket books, priced at \$16, for the first Times-Dispatch Invitational Tournament will go on sale this morning at the Coliseum box office. Virtually all remaining seats are located in the upper deck.

The tournament starts tomorrow night with the University of Virginia (3-1) meeting Virginia Commonwealth (4-4) in the 7 o'clock opener and the University of Richmond (3-3) facing Virginia Tech (5-3) in the 9 o'clock nightcap.

The losers and winners will square off Thursday night at 7 and 9 at the Coliseum.

The Coliseum box office is handling all remaining ticket books and they will be on sale today from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. and tomorrow from 10 a.m. until game time.

in March and had to hustle to enjoy a successful recruiting campaign with such short notice. Pat Tabler, a 6-3 guard from Cincinnati, opted for a professional baseball contract with the New York Yankees rather than a scholarship with Tech.

Bell, who wanted to play for a Division I school, nevertheless was preparing for a possible Division II or III commitment when the coach at Pfeiffer College (N.C.) recommended he check out Virginia Tech and Moir.

The scholarship was available and Moir needed a guard.

"It was a new coach and a whole new program where everyone had an equal chance," recalled Bell. "I didn't feel like I was someone just added to the team.

"I think junior college helped me a lot, but I wish I had had four years at a major college. I wish I could have come in as freshman and played a lot. I was surprised to start the first game, but it made me feel good."

EXTREMELY QUICK AND a good ballhandler (18 turnovers in eight games), Bell feels he has improved his all-around play and, in particular, his defense.

"We played a lot of zone last year, but here we play a lot of man-to-man," he noted. "I had to learn to slide over picks and help other people."

The Hokies bring a 5-3 record into the tournament, which has Virginia meeting Virginia Commonwealth in tomorrow night's first game. Bell thinks Tech ought to be 7-1, pointing to narrow defeats at the hands of West Virginia (74-73) and North Carolina (81-77).

"In junior college, you heard a lot about Carolina," said Bell. "When we were going into the game I thought to myself, 'I can't let them make me look bad.'

"But, once the game started, I found out they were just good players on a good name team that won a lot."

Bell is learning fast.