Gobblers Gain Classic Finals

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FORT MYER — Most of the things Virginia Tech has been doing wrong the past few games all fell into place at once here Friday night.

The defense was good. Free throw shooting was accurate in the clutch. But best of all for the Hokies was the score. That’s because they ended their two-game losing streak and beat American University, 67-66, in the opening round of the Presidential Classic.

“We needed something like this,” said Tech Coach Don DeVoe who has not been particularly happy with the club’s play during the last two weeks.

“It was our second best defensive effort of the season and the best was in the opening game with Richmond,” the first year coach continued.

That explained the defense. The clutch free throw shooting came in the final minute and a half. First Allan Bristow hit two free throws for a 65-64 Tech lead with 1:30 left and 80 seconds later, after both teams missed opportunities, Bill McNeer locked the game with two more foul tosses for a 67-64 lead.

Tech gave American U. a basket with four seconds left.

The win evened Tech’s record at 5-5 and shoves the Hokies into the championship game of a tournament for the second time in 10 days. Tech lost to Davidson in the finals of the Charlotte Invitation last week.

Tech’s opponent will be Texas A&M, which beat the host school George Washington, 72-64, in the second game Friday night. They’ll square off at 9 p.m. Saturday night after American U. plays GW in the consolation game at 7.

The story for Tech wasn’t wrapped up in the last few minutes. The Hokies, forcing American U. into numerous turnovers, enjoyed an 11-point lead with 15 minutes left.

But the Gobblers flew their cool and nearly lost the game. American U. crept so slowly back into the thick of things and finally took the lead as Johnny Lloyd stole the ball for a layup with 6:27 left to give American a 60-59 lead.

The Eagles even had a five-point advantage (64-59) with 4:10 left, but didn’t again until Kermit Washington got a give-me basket in the final seconds as Tech let him score following McNeer’s clinching free throws.

American had gained its lead when Tech was held without a point for more than four minutes after Charlie Lipscomb’s two free throws had made it 59-56 for the Hokies with 8:01 remaining.

It was that kind of a game.

Though Tech played good defense, the contest was a sloppy one. American wound up with 29 turnovers and the Gobblers were right behind with 22.

“I really felt our kids did a pretty good job with their composure considering every-thing,” said DeVoe. What the Tech coach was referring to was American’s press and the officials whom he was up and off the bench at most of the night.

“I felt one of the turning points of the game for American was when we had that 11-point lead and the official missed a goal-tending call against them. Then they got a couple of steals and got right back into the game,” said DeVoe.

DeVoe said the absence and presence of Randy Minix was another turning point. “I had to take Randy out when he got four fouls in the second half,” the coach said, “and then when I put him back in his composure and ability to bring the ball up the court helped us,” DeVoe said.

American’s Kermit Washington, the nation’s leading rebounder, came up with 20 points and 22 rebounds. That’s his usual, but the difference was that he did not dominate the game early.

Virginia Tech
Fg%-Fta Fl-Tla Reb. Pf Tot.
Bristow 12-28 6-10 9 3 30
Lipscomb 7-12 2-2 1 1 8
Minix 6-12 2-2 4 2 14
McNeer 3-8 2-2 2 2 3
Trice 6-13 4-4 2 2 14
Frazier 5-10 5-6 3 5 15
Pippin 9-19 0-0 0 4 9
Total 24-43 19-27 31 26 67

American U.
Fg%-Fta Fl-Tla Reb. Pf Tot.
Mays 1-3 1-2 1 1 3
De Haven 1-6 1-2 2 2 3
Washington 0-4 0-3 1 1 1
Garrett 0-4 0-2 0 0 0
Hill 0-4 0-2 0 0 0
Lloyd 3-10 4-4 2 2 10
Winicki 2-8 2-2 2 2 6
Rowe 0-2 0-0 0 0 0
Total 21-55 24-31 36 23 66

Halftime Score: Tech 37-31