Tech Squeaks By Auburn

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It was one of the most exciting games you would ever want to see. There were absolutely no dull moments from beginning to end. That includes the two free throws by Russell Davis with half a second left on the clock to win the games for the Hokies 83-82.

The two Jucos, Davis and Larry Cook, again were the mainstays for Tech, but they by no means overshadowed the Tiger freshmen who played outstanding basketball. This in fact, was a very good game between two very good teams. Both should, barring anything bizarre, end up in post-season tournaments.

It was a fortunate ending for Tech as the final foul called that put Davis on the line was actually away from the ball and little guard Dave Sensabaugh had just had his short jump shot blocked and then missed what seemed to be an easy follow-up shot from underneath the bucket. Then came the whistle and moments later the two winning throws.

"I just concentrated, I wanted to shoot the free throws because I have the best free throw percentage on the team. I don't necessarily feel that I thrive on pressure, but I was happy to be the one to shoot them."

Coach Don DeVoe simply said, "Thank God he was the one up there for us, he is definitely our best free throw shooter. Sometimes it seems like that man upstairs looks after you."

It did, however, look very bad for the Hokies with only 12 seconds left in the game. Auburn's very good sophomore guard Eddie Johnson was at the free throw stripe after having hit a bucket from the side and being fouled in the process. If he had hit his free throw the best Tech could have hoped for would have been a tie and a hopeful win in overtime.

Johnson missed his free throw and that set up the final second antics by Davis who didn't miss.

It did look in the early moments of the first half as if Tech would have an easy home opening victory. They took off to an eight point lead at one time and Auburn seemed demoralized as they couldn't seem to get their fast break untracked and on occasion, were seen bickering among one another, however, the Tigers really got it rolling behind the great rebounding of freshman Mike Mitchell and also his shooting as he used his incredible jumping ability to lead over everyone and get the ball. At times he would jump so high that he actually would shoot the ball down into the basket.

The Gobblers were led by Davis and Cooke who both finished with 21 points, and Tech got what was probably Kyle McKees best effort of his career as he hit from the perimeter consistently with a soft jump shot and finished with 18 points. McKee led the team in rebounds as he pulled down 15. Mike Collins also had a good evening when he wasn't in foul trouble as he finished with 16 points.

The Tigers were led by Mitchell who finished with 24 points and also pulled down nine rebounds. Johnson finished with 20 points, Redding got 15, Stan Pietkiewicz throw in 10 from downtown, and Miles Patrick finished with 10 in a very well balanced effort.

Tech's next game will be Wednesday night on the home court of the Buckeyes of Ohio State in Columbus, Ohio. It will be another big game for the Hokies, not only because OSU is supposed to be greatly improved, but also because it means a trip back to his alma mater for head coach Don De Voe. It will also be televised for area fans this Wednesday night on Channel 7.

Will It Be Stuffed?

Here is Tech's other junior college transfer at work. Russell Davis, shown here making a strong move to the hoop, but finding stiff resistance from big Larry Redding of Auburn, also tossed in 21 points to help lead his team to their narrow victory. Davis' last two points came with but one second remaining in the game as he tossed in two free throws after being fouled. All Redding was able to do at that point was stand and watch. (Journal photo by Dan Callahan)

Up And In

Larry Cooke, just one of Virginia Tech's fine junior college transfers, lays the ball up and in after making a beautiful move to the basket to score two of his 21 points against Auburn Saturday night as the Hokies opened up their season at home with a narrow triumph over a good Tiger team. (Journal photo by Dan Callahan)