Virginia Tech's Ego Recovers Nicely

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. — A brilliant second half spurt Saturday night carried Virginia Tech's basketball team to an ego-saving, 86-77 victory over Washington in the consolation round of the Michigan Tournament.

Recovering from Friday’s miserable performance against Michigan, the Hokies totally dominated this game against Washington, which had been ranked 13th in the nation coming into this tournament.

The Huskies brought a 5-0 record here, but lost to Manhattan Friday, 81-73, and completely fell apart against Tech.

Russell Davis scored 24 points to lead Tech’s offense, while Dave Sensabaugh—a conditioner for all-tournament honors, had 15 and Sam Foggins and Duke Thorpe came off the bench to give Tech a lift.

The victory was the Hokies’ sixth in eight games, and ensures them of a winning record in December. They meet Alabama, also nationally ranked Monday in Blacksburg and then host Vermont Dec. 31.

“If we had stayed with the players that gave us the lead,” Tech Coach Don DeVoe said, “we might have won by 30 points. As it was, we won by 11 and I’m more than satisfied with that.

“We learned an awful lot about our team tonight,” DeVoe said. “Foggins came in and did the kind of job we felt all along he was capable of playing. He scored 10 points for us, and did a good job all around.

“Thorpe was another guy who went off the bench and was a key factor in our being able to bust the game wide open.”

According to Thorpe, his performance personally and the way Tech played overall was a direct result of Tech’s need to “stay alive.”

“What it comes to,” Thorpe said, “is we needed this game more than Washington did. They’re in a conference and winning that is the most important thing to them.

“Well, we’re not in a conference, so we’ve got to go out and win all the time if we’re going to go to any of the postseason tournaments.”

In the past week, DeVoe kept saying that having a winning record in December would be of paramount importance to his team.

“There are two certain of that, and we still have two games left this month,” DeVoe said. “That means by the time January starts, our season will be one-third over. We’ll have better balance then between home games and road trips, and that should work in our favor.

“IT stands to reason that playing seven of those first 10 games on the road would make matters difficult. Besides that, we were playing teams like Vanderbilt, Ohio State and of course Michigan and Washington up here.

Tech dropped behind, 5-0, in the first few moments of this game Saturday, then put on an eight-point surge and built it into a 22-15 advantage before Washington came back.

Led by Lars Hansen, who finished the night with 23 points, Washington tied the game, 22-22, the rest of the first half, but then Tech went wild.

Sensabaugh was all over the place,” DeVoe said. “He probably played the best game of the year at both ends of the floor.

“I think one of the big things was our emphasis on attacking the press better than we did against Michigan. We had some walk-through drills earlier today, just trying to get our plays worked out, and it paid off.

“Against Michigan, we held the ball too many times when they went into their press. We had to avoid that to beat Washington, and we did.”