Hokies Downed 77-73

'Bama Nips A Tough Tech

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A gang of "Jumping Jacks", disguised in the Crimson color of the University of Alabama showed up at the Tech Coliseum last night, and when the final buzzer had sounded seventh ranked 'Bama had held on to edge gritty Virginia Tech 77-73 in a dandy college basketball game packed with excitement and eventual disappointment for Tech followers.

The visitors led throughout, and Tech was up by once 16-15, on a bucket by Larry Cooke midway in the first half, but the Tide came right back to take the lead for keeps on a fast break bucket by Charlie Cleveland.

From there 'Bama built up an eight point spread only to have the Techmen narrow the gap to three, but again the Tide pulled away to a 41-34 halftime advantage.

Leon Douglas, 6-10, 6-5, Charles Cleveland, and 6-4, Charles Russell were the jumping jacks as 'Bama used an inside attack against shorter Tech to get layup after layup, and numerous puts.

The Tide's jumping ability also resulted in blocked Tech shots, while intimidating Tech's offense, forcing the Hokies to shoot over the taller Tide.

Then there were the quick hands of 6-4 T.R. Dunn a running Whirling Dervish, and the ball handling of frosh, Anthony Murray, who handles the ball like it was on a string, as Bama's defense came up with steal and forced Tech into turnovers.

But it was on the boards that the Tide dominated, so much so, that the leaping visitors were called times for goal tending, and the partisan, over-flow crowd on hand, on numerous other occasions thought goal tending was not called.

Frustrated Tech was slapped with three technical fouls and late in the game a rarely, a dead-ball double foul was called on 'Bama when Tech's Dave Sensibaugh was fouled out of bounds before the ball could be put in play.

This brought howls from the 'Bama bench and Coach Newton to join the Tech protestors already up in arms. To say that it was a rough night for the whistle toppers is to put it mildly.

Regardless it still boiled down to a cold fact - Tech never quitting, always hustling, was no match for the springs in the shoes of the 'Bama Crimson, and All-American candidate Leon Douglas in particular.

Down 54-61 in the second half, Tech hit five straight points on free throws, two by Russ Davis, another by Duke Thorpe, and then a layup by Larry Cooke to make it 61-59, 7 minutes remaining.

But then 'Bama ran off seven unanswered points including a tip by Russell, a three pointer from inside by Douglas, who came back to plunk in two free throws, for a 68-59 bulge.

That streak did it, although Tech down 65-74 with 1:20 to go, rallied to cut the final spread.

Duke Thorpe hit twice, Sensibaugh added a bucket and the two free throws on the double false foul, to cut the 'Bama lead to 76-73. Then a free throw by Russell closed out the scoring, 77-73.

Douglas with 27 points, 11 rebounds and numerous blocked shots, is the heart of this fine 'Bama team which should go on to win the Southeastern Conference title.

The Junior has plenty of help from soph T.R. Dunn, another leaper who scored 16 points, Russell, a senior who also was in double figures with 13, and Cleveland, also a senior, who contributed 12 points.

For Tech, which played its fourth major foe within a six day span, Russ Davis had 16 points, Cooke 12, Kyle McKee 14, and Duke Thorpe came off the bench to contribute 13, Dave Sensibaugh 10.

But it was not enough to prevent the Techmen from their third defeat against six wins.

DeVoe's squad now has a week off before facing the University of Vermont at the Coliseum New Year's Eve.

And there is no way the New Englanders will jump in the manner that 'Bama did. The Crimson Tide have collared all the jumpers in creation. At least so it seemed last night.

They could touch the stars if the ball went that high, and they are not on stilts!