Hokies Fall, 81-77

Gamecocks Edge Tech

BY DENNIS LAYNA
Times Staff Writer
BLACKSBURG - Virginia Tech thought that if it could get through the month of December, it was in store for a great basketball season. The Gobblers got through the first month with flying colors. Now January is turning into a disaster. Tech lost its second consecutive game Wednesday night. South Carolina, 16th ranked, beat the Hokies, 87-77, on two field goals in the last minute.

"We're not the same team we were a few weeks ago," admitted Tech coach Don DeVoe.
"When you're not playing any better than we are, you're going to lose."

The Gobblers had starters Larry Coke and Mike Collins yanked. "Mike thought they could use their three outs when they could have used them in the closing minutes with the score close.

"We got into foul trouble and that hurt. We lost players who needed to be on the floor, sitting on the bench," DeVoe pointed out.

Tech led by as much as eight points in the first half, 29-24, and had control of the game for the first 10 minutes. Then the Gobblers went cold and couldn't buy a basket. It took the Gamecocks just four minutes to score 14 points and take a 28-24 lead.

Tech managed to regain its composure and led at halftime, 44-47.

South Carolina almost made the game a rout in the first part of the second half. The Gamecocks grabbed a 10-point lead when the Gobblers again could get nothing to go in.

Then Russell Davis and Mark Cartwright led a comeback by the Hokies that cut the USC lead gradually until Tech tied the score at 75-75. Freshman Jack Gillard, however, twice drove for baskets and Tom Scott added two foul shots with 50 left.

"If we had gotten a 10-point lead with some of the more experienced teams we had in the past, we would have in- creased the margin," said Gamecock coach Frank McGuire. "But this is a young team."

Davis finished with 26 points to lead Tech, but Cartwright was the man who came through when the pressure was on. He was the only Gobbler who successfully played the South Carolina zone defense.

Cartwright attended South Carolina for one semester before transferring to Tech. "I know most of the players on the team, I know how they play. They've been playing that zone defense all the time," Cartwright explained. "I play better against a zone than I do a man to man."

According to DeVoe, "I felt like Mark would play a lot better because he can shoot from the outside. We've been in trouble in the last five minutes without Mark to generate that offense we need."

"We knew Cartwright could shoot," agreed McGuire.

Gillon, finished with 20 points for the Gamecocks and DeVoe singled him out as a big reason for Tech's downfall.
"He makes things happen and you need a point guard who will do that. Gillon pretty much ran the show. He did the things they had to do to get the lead."

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Virginia Tech's Dave Sensibaugh (12) Falls on South Carolina's Mike Dunleavy