Liberated Cooke makes Tech move

By Bob McLelland
Sports Editor

Blacksburg—Larry Cooke said he feels like a free man these days and it's all helping the Virginia Tech basketball team to turn its impressive victories.

"I was a forward and center in high school," said the 6-6 Cooke. "Then I went to junior college and still played up front. But when I got to Tech, they made me a guard. Man, I'd a lot rather play guard. But it wasn't easy making the switch."

"Maybe I was trying too hard or something. Anyway, I wasn't relaxed. I was in a mental strain. I was trying to adapt to the system and was scared of making a mistake. Everytime I did something wrong I looked at the bench."

But now I'm more relaxed. I'm running, shooting and passing off like I know best. It's been great these past four games. I just hope it keeps up.

Cooke again supplied the spark here last night as he and the Hokies destroyed William and Mary 101-76. The most impressive part of Tech had came when the reserves kept trying to put the score over the 100 mark. They were even making personal fouls to get possession. Finally, Barry Foy turned the trick with a field goal with just three seconds left.

The awesome Tech display left Coach George Balasini and his Indians a bit dazed.

"I'm glad that's finally over," said Balasini. "Tech really jumped on us good. We wanted to slow the tempo but we didn't have a chance. They really killed us quick—especially on the boards. That McKee (Kyle, the 6-10 Tech center) is a changed man."

"When we beat them down at our place (69-60) last month our guys beat him on the boards. But tonight he handled us pretty good. He dominated us inside."

Tech more than doubled the offense, had allowed the opposition an average of only 82.9 points per game and the previous single high was 86. Tech made shambles of those marks.

"We had them 17-4 and they called time out," said Cooke. "I knew they had planned to slow it down. But when they came back I heard the coach say 'regular' and I knew then they were back. That meant they were going to try and play with us and I knew it was all over."

The win was the fourth straight for Tech and moved the Hokies to 15-7 for the season. It also was the team's second straight game over 100 points (106-79 over Richmond here Saturday). W&M fell to 12-9 for the season. It was Tech's 58th consecutive win at home over state opponents. The Hokies have yet to lose to state opposition in the Coliseum.

W&M started three freshmen and two sophomores. Balasini said playing in the Coliseum with the noisy and spirited Tech fans awed his young team. "They just looked stunned," Balasini said. "You know it takes a pretty experienced man to come in here and play his own game."

Coach Don DeVoe again gave his bench a good workout as 13 players saw action. Five responded with double-figure scoring.

Russell Davis led with 25. Cooke pitched in 16, McKee had 13, Dave Semnough 12 and Mark Cartwright 10. McKee also had 12 rebounds and Duke Thorpe scored 11, although neither played more than 30 minutes.

W&M's Mike Enoch (24) and Tech's Larry Cooke battle for rebound under Indians' basket

North Carolina here Monday night.

"We'll give them the same medicine we gave Richmond and William and Mary," said Cooke. "I don't mean that as bragging because I know how good Carolina is. But I'm just saying if we play like we have the past few games, we can beat any team on our schedule."

And if Cooke continues running and with confidence, Tech just might pull it off.