Kupchak burns Tech

By ROB McLELLAND
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BLACKSBURG — They claim this is the year of the guards in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Maybe so.

But take it from Coach Dean Smith of North Carolina and Coach Don DeVoe of Virginia Tech, big Mike Kupchak will not have to take a back seat to anyone, when it comes to playing the game of basketball.

"I voted for him on my All-American ballot," said DeVoe.

"I think he deserves it—after tonight I know he does," added Smith. "He’s our man . . . the one we go to when we are in trouble. He really did the job tonight."

But Carolina wasn’t in trouble long here last night—maybe about 10 minutes of tight going. But once Kupchak and his mates erupted for a 16-4 spurt midway in the first half, the issue was over—despite several minor surges by the frustrated Gobblers.

Actually the Tar Heels were rather calm but most satisfied with the victory. "This was one we had to win," said guard Brad Hoffman. "We were embarrassed by Maryland at home Saturday (94-71). If we had lost tonight there is no telling what would have happened."

Kupchak agreed. "It might not show in the ACC statistics," he said. "But we knew this was a pivotal game. No Coach Smith didn’t give us any pep talk. He just told us how good we could be if we wanted it."

"That sport we had in the first half was the best we have had all season. Tech is a good ball club and the crowd up here really gets loud. They were bringing down the place in the first half. But they got a little quiet when we pulled ahead. I’m glad it didn’t get down to a point or two—the crowd might have made a difference."

The scene was a bit different in the Tech quarters where most of the Gobblers were shaking their heads in disbelief. Russell Davis had his poorest night of the season with just four points. He was only 2 for 8 from the floor and many of his misses were inside.

"I never saw so many long arms in my life," he said. "I had to change the arch on all my shots. But that’s no excuse. Carolina is a solid club. They have no weakness that I could see."

Larry Cooke started fast by hitting Tech’s first 12 points and 16 of the first 22. He cooled off afterwards and finished with 26.

"I don’t know what happened," he said. "I thought I was moving like I always do but I just wasn’t getting the ball."

The win gave Carolina a 16-4 record and puts the Tar Heels in the right frame of mind for their next game—an ACC battle Saturday night at Virginia.

But things are different for the Gobblers, who dropped to 10-8. They must regroup for a Western trip to Oklahoma City Thursday night and Oral Roberts on Saturday.

"We can’t think about this one too long or everything will be lost," said Tech guard Dave Seminoff. "We have to win the next two or where can we hang any tournament bid hopes."

Larry Cooke goes high for Tech basket but it wasn’t enough as North Carolina whipped the Hokies.

The pace was rapid the first half that ended with Carolina leading 53-47. But it was different in the second half when neither team showed much aggressiveness on offense. Carolina actually went to its four corners offense with almost 11 minutes left to play.

"Man, that four corners will drive you crazy," said Seminoff. "I know it popped me out. But we just weren’t ready . . . then maybe we were too ready. This was a big game and we really wanted to win. Now that we didn’t I hope we’ve learned a lesson."

It wasn’t surprising to DeVoe that Carolina played so well. "I knew when they lost that bad to Maryland we were in for trouble," DeVoe said. "Carolina has never played two bad games in a row."

"But that doesn’t concern me so much. I’m disappointed in the way our team played. We just completely lacked any offensive play. We didn’t go to the boards and we didn’t play defense. There wasn’t much more we could have done wrong."