Kupchaked: Tourney Hopes Dim As Tarheels Whip Tech

By Bill Mason
Sports Editor
BLACKSBURG - Nationally ranked, offensively dull North Carolina outrebounded, outpassed, outscored and outcoached the "Kupchaked" Virginia Tech Monday night before a Tech Coliseum full house and a television audience.

Tech coach Skip Smith had finished his precision scoring and showcased his way through many minutes of "four corners" stalling featuring the Phil Ford dribbling show, Tech had lost 87-75 and a large crowd bought in believing in Tech's game plan of "N.B. Here We Come" hung limp.

Tech's chances for a post season tournament berth, flickering badly, must now be fanned by three consecutive victories starting tonight at Oklahoma City - if they are not to be extinguished.

North Carolina's trio of All America forwards are formidable foes, but Tech's defense which denied Tech its inside scoring, and almost total domination of the boards led by Kupchak's 15 rebounds limited Tech to a box 61 percent (9-16) goal shooting average in the first half.

Tech's were sharp and determined in their comeback from a Hamilton wing loss to another national ranked team, ACC hard Maryland in their previous outing.

Gobbler coach Don Devoe felt the quickness of Carolina's and its aggressiveness in the way they "got after the ball" hurt Tech more than the "four corners" superior height.

"We let them score more than 50 points and shoot 61 percent in the first half," he said. "You can win basketball games that way.

Rebounder Devoe said "we certainly had our opportunities. They (UNC) had great second effort. I gambled at the last and put in the quickest kids we've got.

I voted for (Mitch) Kupchak on the All America team last week. UNC is capable of winning the national championship."

Carolina coach Dean Smith termed Virginia Tech "one of the best teams we have played all year" and called Tech's Larry Cooke (the game's high score with 21) "an outstanding player."

Smith said he realized that Tech's Russell Davis is a dangerous scorer but "our Walter Davis did a good job defending him."

Asked about the "four corners" which he rejected to early, Smith admitted I don't like this kind of game, but we weren't getting well established on offense.

Smith was happy with the performance of Kupchak (19 of 18 from the field, 6 of 7 from the line, 19 rebounds and 24 points) and freshman guard Ford (17 assists and 9 points) and felt that his team's fast break and Kupchak's rebounding made the difference.

Larry Cooke carried Tech during the first half, scoring 18 before intermission, Kyle McKee, held to five rebounds, had all of his nine points in the first half. Cooke led Tech rebounding with seven.

Tech attempted several rallies, but seldom closed to closer than six points.

Larry Cooke said he felt the team will not allow itself to get down, adding, "The warm up isn't over. We've got three more games to win. There's no need to stop now."

Cooke said he still rates Wake Forest as the best team Tech has played this year. Asked what the team's biggest problem was against Carolina he said, "We didn't get back on the break as fast."

North Carolina: 87, Kupchak: 24, Davis: 14, Ford, 13, Tommy LaGarde, nine; John Kuester, eight; Bruce Buckley, Ed Stalls, and Brad Hoffman, each six, and Eric Haney, one.

Virginia Tech: 75, Cooke: 26, Mark Cartwright, 12; Kyle McKee, nine; Dave Sandhuag, eight; Duke Thorpe and Russell Davis, each four; Sam Foggian, six; Mike Collins, George Aguilor and Jay Skubbonsaid, each two.

FOGGIN FIRES - Freshman Sam Foggian, who played 16 minutes against North Carolina, had four rebounds, one assist and three for six from the field for six points against the tall, talented 'Heels. Awaiting the rebound (right) is Carolina's Mitch Kupchak, who led his team with 24 points.