Virginia Tech Baseball Boss Humphreys Hopes To Return Agressive, Gashouse Style To State

By BOB MINGS
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Bob Humphreys will bring excitement into Virginia Tech's baseball program, if he has his way. "I'd like to have a team of Pete Roses," says the new coach, referring to the style of play which has caused the Cincinnati Reds' right fielder to be named "Charlie Hustle." "He (Rose) is the kind of player you like to knock down if you're a pitcher (as Humphreys was) but the kind of guy you'd like to have on your side.

"He's a good drawing card for baseball," remarks Humphreys who pitched in the major leagues for Detroit, St. Louis, the Chicago Cubs, the old Washington Senators (now the Texas Rangers) and Milwaukee.

"I like the agressive, gashouse style of baseball. I want people breaking up double plays, things of that nature. That's what I like to see....If there's any one thing the game needs it is to get back of the old style of baseball being played when I was playing," continues the Hampden-Sydney graduate.

"That style is gradually being taken away," notes Humphreys, citing directives from the game's officials to stop "throwing at" opposing hitters and setting fines if "beanballs" were continued in a game.

Humphreys also mentions the fact players were directed not to argue with the umpires.

"No wonder the game got dull," is Humphreys' conclusion. "Why are hockey and football drawing so well? They are contact sports, they're rough...."

"How many people have been killed playing baseball? Anytime anybody's been hurt in the last 70 years it's been an accident. But the way they're playing out there today it's like a church league."

Humphreys vows the Gobblers will reach the NCAA regional tournament in Starkville, Miss., in late Spring.

"I think we've got the stuff to do it," says Humphreys, who also plans to keep more Virginia players in the State, namely Blacksburg.

"There have been a number of high draft choices in Virginia's high schools," points out the Covington native, "especially in the Northern part of the State.

"I want to get the quality players in here. We've got a lot to offer. The facilities are as good as any around, it's good academically and there's a super setting here."

Humphreys notes schools such as perennially powerful Florida State have 19 (the NCAA maximum) baseball scholarships.

"The players are here, it's just a matter of getting them."

Everything, however, is based on having a successful program, he admits.

Humphreys said two football players, Paul Adams (a No. 3 draft pick of Kansas City two years ago) and David Halstead, will be on the team. Also returning are leading hitter Gene Fornash and Peninsula's Mike Arrington and Tom Bailey.

Humphreys said his coaching will be predicated on what he learned from the managers under whom he played. Making the biggest impressions were Dave Bristol and the late Gil Hodges.

Humphreys praised Bristol for emphasizing fundamentals because "my philosophy is that any sport you play, you have to learn fundamentals."

The Gobblers begin their season March 21 at High Point.