Gobbler baseball making changes

By BOB TEITELBAUM

There are changes coming in Virginia Tech baseball, even though they may not be properly noticed.

But former major league pitcher Bob Humphreys, the new Tech coach, is determined to try to make Tech competitive with other independent powerhouse teams in the Southeast such as Georgia Southern, Florida State, Miami and South Alabama.

Traditionally an independent schedule but Humphreys has increased this year's number of games to 37. Twenty-four of them are on the road where Tech opens Saturday when it goes to High Point, N.C.

"Eventually," said the Tech coach, "I want to have a 30-game schedule." It sounds like a pro baseball team, but Humphreys reasons that once a team starts playing it might as well be in a game as to practice every day.

Tech's trip to High Point starts the annual spring training trek south with stops at North Carolina, Pembroke and Georgia Southern. The fall series — four games — at Southern is the one that curdles the blood.

Last year Southern won Tech's district and advanced to the NCAA College World Series in Omaha, Neb. Southern also played Tech one game in which it won 28-0. That gives one an idea about how far along Southern's program is compared with Tech's.

"We don't play too many softball teams," Humphreys noted about his team's schedule. "And I think Georgia Southern has played 63 games with 52 of them at home.

"If we could beat Southern once or twice it would really be something," said Humphreys. "To go to the NCAA tournament as an independent here, you have to have a good record. I don't think we could play 30 games and get a bid."

But Humphreys says this (the NCAA bid) might be for the future. Next year he hopes to gain more even distribution of home and road games as well as recruit some players. He didn't renew any after being named last summer to replace longtime coach Red Laird, who retired.

This year's Gobbler team will be inexperienced and may find it tough to match last year's 13-10 record.

The only returning starter for pitching is Mike Arrington, who posted a respectable 4.2 record. Humphreys will use Bruce Brushwood of Yorktown, senior Gary Zets (0-1), and freshmen John Neilson of Garden City, N.Y., and Dave Tinsley as his other starters.

Relievers will be Dennis Waumsnanski (0-1) and Tom Bailey (1-1), along with Dave Stafford, a transfer from Northeast Oklahoma.

Tech returns Gene Fornash (276) at shortstop and Vince Carbaugh (222) at second to help the middle of the infield. Tony Vardoncoeur (.286) is back at third as are both catchers — Jimmy Wright (278) and Dan Shrievies (244). Humphreys will also get outfielder David Halstead (.360) back in a month from a broken ankle.

Two Roanoke All-Metro selections from last year — first baseman Lewis Dillon of William Fleming and outfielder Sandy Hill of Glenvar — will also be in the opening lineup.

THE SCHEDULE
March 16-17: at High Point, N.C.; March 18-19: at North Carolina: March 20-21: at Pembroke; March 22-23: at Georgia Southern; March 24-25: at South Carolina; March 25-26: March 27-28: at East Michigan; March 29-30: at Nebraska (doubleheader); April 2-3-4: at West Virginia (doubleheader); April 5-6: at William and Mary; April 7-8: East Tennessee; April 9-10: at North Carolina; April 11-12: at Georgia State; April 13-15: at Virginia; April 16-17: at Virginia Tech; April 18-19: at Old Dominion; April 20-21: at William and Mary; April 22-23: at Old Dominion; April 24-25: at Auburn; April 26-27: at West Virginia; April 28-29: at Virginia Tech; April 30-May 1: at Virginia; May 2-3: at Old Dominion; May 4: at Western Carolina; May 5-6: at Auburn.