Gobblers, Watkins Down ODU, Play W&M Today

BY BOB MINGS
Daily Press Sports Writer
NORFOLK — Pinch-hitter Joe Carrier bounced out to third and members of the press headed toward the Old Dominion side of the field, seeking a short interview with one of the spectators.

The spectator was former Yankee great Phil Rizzuto, who had come out to see an old teammate (Bud Metheny) but arrived just in time to see Metheny’s Old Dominion Monarchs bow to Virginia Tech and Jerry Watkins, 4-2. The Gobblers meet William and Mary today at Cary Park.

Rizzuto, while offering condolences to Metheny, whose club now is 5-11 with a doubleheader slated today against the University of South Carolina, looked at Assistant Coach Tony Zontini’s uniform and noted the Yankee influence.

"The colors are almost the same," said Rizzuto, "and I see you’ve got the pin stripes. And it’s (the uniform) double-knit, too, I see."

Rizzuto was reminded Metheny would be coaching against another ex-Yankee today (Bobby Richardson), then asked the ODU boss if he would be playing "Enos Slaughter’s team (Duke)."

Rizzuto’s short visit helped take some of the sting off the ODU defeat, a game which featured sparkling pitching by Watkins, the former Newport News High School standout.

Watkins was victimized by a bad hop in the fourth inning when Jack Baker’s hit bounced over centerfielder Mike Dixon’s head with the ball rolling to the fence. Baker scored behind former Kecoughtan star Glenn (Red) Simpson who had walked.

“That’s the second year in a row the ball’s bounced over my head here," said Dixon, the former Warwick High School Farmer.

As things turned out, those two runs were the only threat the Monarchs managed against the ex-Typhoons and Post 25 ace.

Watkins, winning his second game in three decisions, got stronger as the game went on and recorded 11 strikeouts.

At one time Watkins struck out five straight batters. The Gobblers (5-6) chipped away at Old Dominion hurler Ned Hamara, scoring a run in the sixth and another in the seventh before getting the winning two tallies in the eighth.

In the early going, it didn’t look as though Watkins would be around at the finish, but it was Hamara (0-3) who had to be relieved in the ninth.

Watkins was throwing an excessive amount of pitches and it seemed this would eventually tell.

"I just got stronger toward the end," said Watkins. "I had been relying on my curve ball but they started getting good wood on it the last two innings."

"Then," said Watkins, "I went to my fast ball and it started moving.

"This game took a lot out of me," the Newport News resident said. "It’s the first time I’ve pitched in three weeks."

The Gobblers had had a run of bad weather, forcing postponement or cancellation of several games.