Hokies' Loss Irks Humphreys

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BLACKSBURG — During his short stay at Virginia Tech, Bob Humphreys' baseball team has never beaten Virginia, a fact that is not at all pleasing to the former major league relief pitcher.

"Position by position, they don't have but one or two players that could play for us. That's why I hate losing to them," said Humphreys after his team had dropped a 5-3 decision to the Cavaliers Wednesday afternoon at the Virginia Tech baseball diamond.

The loss was only the third in 11 games for the Hokies, whose only previous losses were against national power Georgia Southern. The victory improved Virginia's record to 7-6 and, after three consecutive losses, the win brought a smile to the face of Cavalier Coach Jim West.

"We've made some normal mistakes, but we've also made some we shouldn't be making," said West. "This team should be about 11-2 or at least 10-3."

Which was exactly what pitcher Barry Hollar had said about the Cavaliers in a story in The Roanoke Times Wednesday morning. West did not disapprove of Hollar's remarks but they were offensive to assistant Sammy Beale, who held a team meeting before Wednesday's game.

"Much of what he said was true," said Virginia third baseman Robbie Emerson, "but having him read the story to us helped us get up that much more."

Hollar had called the Cavaliers "depressing," adding that it might not be a bad idea if West benched some of the players that weren't doing so well.

Virginia never trailed against the Hokies, grabbing a 2-0 lead in the first inning on four shameless hits.

Cavalier second baseman Duval White opened the inning with a routine grounder to shortstop Scott Atkins. The ball hopped just as it reached Atkins, striking the freshman from Glenvar High above the left eye. Atkins left the game under his own power, holding an ice bag to his injured face.

After catcher Dan Bernstein flew to right, Bob Sellers advanced White to third with a bloop single to left. The Cavaliers' Dean Pallotta followed with a slow roller down the first base line that Tech pitcher Mike Arrington elected not to field. White scored as the ball hit the bag.

After Pete Andersen forced Pallotta at second, Joe Sroba hit another Texas leaguer single to score Sellers.

Virginia added a run in the fifth and another in the bottom of the sixth and appeared to be sailing behind starter Scott Gardner, who allowed just four hits and no runs during the first five innings.

Gardner tired in the sixth, however, walking three before bowing to Harry Thomas, normally a starter. Thomas walked another two batters as the Hokies pulled within two runs, 4-2, without the benefit of a base hit.

Virginia Tech scored one again in the bottom of the eighth, but not before the Cavaliers' Andersen had put the game out of reach with his third homer of the year over the right center fence.

"We just lacked aggressiveness all day," said Humphreys. "We made mistakes at the plate and some in the field. And everytime Gardner pitches against us, he looks like a Hall of Famer. We've got to realize that when you're an independent, you've got to win them all."