Humphreys Signs Third Baseman

By Bill Mason
BLACKSBURG—Virginia Tech baseball coach Bob Humphreys is continuing his recruiting campaign for next season, pleased at having landed a Floridian who may take over the third base position vacated by graduated Tony Varboncœur in his first season, but not happy over having lost two pitching recruits to the South Carolina Gamecocks.

The return of a former pitcher from Blacksburg may help in the continuing search for pitching talent.

The coach’s only signer so far is Rick Wade, a third baseman from Miami-Dade Junior College in South. Humphreys describes Wade as “an all around good ball player. Attitude-wise he’s very tough and he really knows the game.”

Varboncœur, a steady performer during his four seasons at Tech, enjoyed by far his best season as a senior and will be hard to replace. The transfer looks good enough to fill the vacancy.

Humphreys said his top two prospects (names not mentioned) felt that a baseball program already was established at Columbia, S.C., and were impressed by the facilities. He acknowledged that the fact that the Gamecocks went to the finals of the College World Series also might have had something to do with it.

Dave Stafford, who pitched for Tech as a freshman in 1974 before leaving school, confirmed last weekend that he will enter the Summer term and will try out for the team in the fall.

Stafford played last Summer for Centennial’s team in the Blacksburg Church League, the team that won the championship, often winning games by the margin of a dozen or more runs.

A walk-on whose father once played ball for Tech also may contribute to the pitching strength. Duke Dickinson of Columbus, O., went 9-0 in his senior year for his high school team. The team, in a league comparable with Virginia’s Group AAA ranking, had a 23-2 season record.

Summer baseball is on the schedule for many Tech returnees. Humphreys commented: “Those who play in the Summer will be more advanced than the others and be able to compete ... Those who aren’t playing may have trouble making the team.”

Catcher Wayne Shelton and outfielder Sandy Hill will play in the Valley League, along with graduated infielder Gene Fornash and recruit Wade.

Pitcher Bob Fisher is playing American Legion ball in Kansas and pitcher John Neilen is pitching in the Atlantic Collegiate League in Long Island, N.Y.

Outfielder Dennis Duff, infielder Danny Grois and pitchers Jim and Tim Puglisi all are playing the Clark Griffith League in the District of Columbia.

Infielder Scott Atkins is playing in the Virginia Amateur League. Atkins and designated hitter Paul Adams will attend Tech’s summer session.

Dillon is working and may not be able to work in any baseball. Graduated pitcher Mike Arrington of Hampton and infielder Gene Fornash of Richmond both probably will attend major league tryouts. Arrington, who was not drafted, hopes to be signed as a free agent.

Humphreys rated pitcher Mike Enos of state champion Turner Ashby as the only possible prospect in the high school ranks and Enos has one more year to play.

After completing his tour of various high school baseball playoffs he described the scholastic talent: “Some are pretty good, but none are really outstanding.”

Tech will play more exhibition games in the Fall than it did last season and a conditioning program will continue until the start of the regular season.

Tech had a 26-10 season record this year, hampered by 16 runouts and a late-season slump in its efforts to reach the playoffs.

Among the new faces to be faced next year will be appropriately enough—South Carolina.