Baseball Team Looks Forward To Season; Duff, Shelton, Griel Keys To Success

By Edmund Greene

As springtime nears, the Virginia Tech baseball team will be out to improve on last year's school record of 33 wins. With only three seniors on this year's squad, Coach Bob Humphreys will be looking to several juniors to help provide leadership for his young team. This year's team will not be inexperienced by any means. Many of these juniors have two full years of college baseball under their belts.

Dennis Duff, Wayne Shelton, and Danny Griel will be returning for their third year under Humphreys. Duff, who sports a .314 career batting average, and Shelton (.317 career average) have combined in their first two years for 20 home runs and 119 runs batted in. They will be counted on to supply most of the power the Hokies will generate this season. Shelton is also closing in on the career mark for doubles, which is presently held by Wayne Javins with 28, and while in a game against High Point last season, Duff set records by hitting 3 home runs and collecting 13 total bases. Griel returns for his third year as Hokie second baseman. While stealing 17 bases last year, Griel was thrown out only twice. Very quick at turning the double play, Griel committed only 4 errors last season, and should add strength to the Tech defense.

Other juniors include newcomers Skip Dofflenny and Larry Smoot, Dofflenny comes to Tech after two years at Manatee Junior College in Florida. A fine defensive shortstop with good hands, Dofflenny will team with Griel to give Tech excellent defense up the middle. Smoot, who spent his first two years at Chowan, will add depth to the Hokies. He can play outfield or catch and has a strong throwing arm.

Virginia Tech's super record last spring rested largely on Humphreys' decision to gamble on youthful pitching. These youthful pitchers of a year ago are now counted on to be the backbone of the Tech pitching staff. Jim Puglisi, who led the Tech staff last year in wins with 7, is closing in on the career pitching mark of 20 wins, held by Mike Arrington. After finishing 10th in the nation in strikeouts during his freshman year, Puglisi is halfway towards the career mark in strikeouts, also held by Arrington. His brother, Tim, injured during most of his freshman year, will be counted on to provide dependable relief and get the job done when called upon. Bobby Fisher, one of many surprises last year, returns for his junior year after posting a two year record of 7-1.

After spending almost a season and a half with a sore arm, Fisher suddenly turned things around with 5-0 mark last year, including the only shutout by a Tech hurler. Dean Powell, a junior college transfer from Ferrum, comes to Virginia Tech after posting 12 wins for the Panthers. The big lefthander will be counted on by Humphreys to be a dependable starter and to be one of the leaders of the Tech pitching staff.

These players are proved performers and will be counted on by Humphreys to provide leadership for the team. With only three seniors on this year's squad, these juniors should blend in nicely with the freshmen and sophomores on the team for a fine season this spring as well as in springs to come.