ACC Offers Tech Advantages

By JERRY VERNON
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Monday Virginia Tech Baseball Coach Bob Humphreys joined the growing list of Hokie athletic personnel who see advantages for Tech if it becomes affiliated with the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"Hopefully if we get in the ACC we'll get some ACC schools in here (Blacksburg) to play," the former professional pitcher told members of the Blacksburg Sports Club at a noon luncheon in the Donaldson Brown Center. "Like I told you, they'll play you there, but not here."

Scheduling is just one problem that has bothered the coach for the past few months as he prepared for the Hokie baseball season which opens Thursday when Tech travels to South Carolina to meet Newberry College.

"The month of March is going to make or break us," warned Humphreys whose squad advanced to the NCAA playoffs last season in compiling a 33-9 record. "I haven't even told my players this yet, but we play the better teams in March. There's only seven teams on the schedule this year which had losing records last year."

The Hokies open this season minus three key performers from last year — relief pitcher Orvin Kiser, slugger Paul Adams and shortstop Scott Atkins. Kiser who compiled a .373 earned run average last season in 18 appearances now plays professionally with the Texas organization. Adams has played out his eligibility and surgery has sidelined Atkins for the season. The shortstop will have two years of eligibility remaining when he returns next season.

The absence of Kiser may be the most serious blow to the Hokies, as the coach put it, "if we had him this year I know how far we would go — all the way to Omaha (site of the College World Series). But as we stand I really don't know what to expect this year."

Most of Humphreys' hopes will depend upon six recruits including three pitchers. The coach plans for New York native John Power to fill the relief spot vacated by Kiser, but is laying much of his hand on starter Mike Rhodes from Bayside High School in Virginia Beach. In the Group AAA state finals last season, Rhodes cleared up any question of his ability on the mound. He appeared in four games and struck out eight, 12, 16 and 18 batters. The Hokies' other new pitcher, transfer student Dean Powell from Ferrum Junior College, is injured, but should see action this season.

"How far we go this year will depend upon our pitching," admitted Humphreys. "With good pitching, we'll probably go back to the playoffs. Finding someone in the bullpen is going to be a big help."

Uncovering replacements for Atkins and Adams will do nothing to hurt the Tech program. First baseman Harold Williams, shortstop Skip Dofflemyer and outfielder Tony Metts are expected to add the missing punch to the Hokie lineup.

Dofflemyer, a transfer student from Manatee Junior College in Florida, as Humphreys phrased it, "is not the offensive player that Atkins was ... but defenses better."

Williams decided to put his 6-4, 225-pound frame into a baseball uniform rather than accepting the full football scholarship East Carolina University offered the prep star. Humphreys is counting on the Ohio native to earn the slugger title among his teammates. He may be utilized as a designated hitter.

The Tech coach described Metts, from Warwick High School as "a player who runs well and hits with power if he can get his head straight."

"The Norfolk native, according to Humphreys, has experienced some academic problems this year.

The coach told sports club members he plans to utilize his flyghty, base running strategy again this season. Last year Tech stole 99 bases in 112 attempts.