Hokies Suffer Through 1-3 Trip; Baseballers Looking For Scoring

By Edmund Greene

Weak hitting, sub-par defense, and rain plagued the Virginia Tech baseball team as they traveled to South Carolina and Georgia for their season opening southern tour during spring break. The Hokies dropped three out of four games, including two losses by a single run.

The first stop of the trip was Newberry, South Carolina. The Hokies rode the pitching of Jim Puglisi and the bat of Wayne Shelton in handing the Indians their first loss of the season, 7-4. Tech broke on top in the sixth inning as Mike Preisser singled, Rick Wade walked, Sandy Hill reached on an error, and all three scored on Wayne Shelton's double off the fence in left centerfield. Tech added another run in the eighth as Dan Grieel doubled and scored on Sandy Hill's single. The Hokies put the game on ice in the ninth and claimed their first victory by scoring three unearned runs. Puglisi scattered six hits, struck out 12 Newberry batters and went the distance for the first time since his freshman year.

Rain and wet grounds caused the cancellation of the Hokies second game at USC-Aiken.

In an extra-inning game at Statesboro, Georgia, Tech lost to Georgia Southern 5-4 for their first loss of the season. Tech scored first in the second inning when Wayne Shelton walked, advanced to second on a passed ball, and scored on outfielder Dennis Duff's single. Georgia Southern went ahead in the sixth as the Eagles scored three runs on an error, three hits, and a sacrifice fly. Tech tied the score in the top of the eighth and went ahead 4-3 in the 11th as Shelton walked and scored on Duff's triple to right center. Gerogia Southern tied the score in the bottom of the inning and won the game in the 12th as third baseman Jimmy Matthews singled and scored while attempting to steal second as catcher Wayne Shelton's throwing error got past centerfielder Sandy Hill. Duke Dickerson went 11 innings for the Hokies allowing only eight hits. Tim Puglisi relieved in the 12th and took the loss for the Hokies, who fell to 1-1.

Rain and wet grounds once again forced the cancellation of the next three games—against The Citadel, Salisbury State, and Charleston Baptist.

Last Tuesday Tech opened a two game series with the Gamecocks of the University of South Carolina. South Carolina hurlers Ed Lynch and Jamie Chakales combined to hold Tech to only two hits as the Gamecocks defeated the Hokies 10-0. The Gamecocks jumped on starter Dave Tinsley for three runs in the first inning and reliever Harold Berkey for two runs in the third before freshman John Power came in and stopped the Gamecock hitters until he tired in the seventh inning and gave up five more runs.

Tech had opportunities to score in at least seven innings, but the Hokies could not capitalize on the Gamecock mistakes and cash in the runs.

The next day Gamecock ace Jim Lewis held Tech to only three hits as South Carolina defeated Tech 1-0. South Carolina scored the only run in the sixth as Mark VanBever singled, stole second, and advanced to third when no one took the throw from catcher Wayne Shelton and the ball rolled into centerfield. VanBever scored on the next play when leftfielder Chuck McLean's ground ball got through the infield for a single.

The Hokies closest threat came in the fifth as they placed runners on second and third with only one out. Lewis beared down, and killed the rally by striking out Dan Grieel and getting Rick Wade on a grounder to third. Jim Puglisi went the distance for the Hokies, for his second complete game in as many starts. With the loss coming on the unearned run in the sixth, Puglisi's record fell to 1-1, and Tech ended a disappointing southern trip with a record of 1-3.

Good pitching was the lone bright spot for the Hokies on the trip with fine performances coming from both Jim Puglisi and Duke Dickerson. The Tech defense was responsible for many of the runs scored by the opposition as they committed 13 errors on the four game trip. Perhaps the lack of outdoor batting practice was a factor, for the Hokies, who hit .292 as a team last season, could only manage a .125 composite team batting average. With 16 of their next 21 games at home, the Hokies are hoping to improve on that average and return to the form that produced 33 victories last season.