8 in Row for Tech

By DOUG DOUGHTY
Sports Writer

BLACKSBURG — If this is springtime, you can’t prove it by Virginia Tech pitcher Mike Rhodes.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever played in weather like this,” said Rhodes, who nonetheless encountered few problems from Marshall’s Thundering Herd, as the Hokies’ baseball team won its eighth straight, 6-2, Wednesday.

Not only did the temperature hover just above the freezing mark, but intermittent winds and snow flurries kept even the hardest fans away. Tech Sports Information Director Wendy Weisend allowed as how the conditions were the worst he’d seen since 1958, when the Hokies fell to The Citadel, 9-8, in 13 innings.

For a while, it seemed as if Wednesday’s contest was also headed for overtime, as the score was 0-0 going into the bottom of the sixth and teams had just two hits apiece. “At that point, I could foresee the score being 1-0 or 2-1,” said Tech coach Bob Humphreys, “and us losing after 16 guys had run together while chasing a pop up.”

With two out in the sixth, however, catcher Wayne Shelton unloaded his eighth home run of the season to right field, and the flood gates brought in four more runs after three errors, a double by Steve Dodd and a single by Harold Williams.

Not exceptionally fleet afoot, Williams even scored the final run of the inning on the back end of a double steal with Skip Dofflemyer.

“I figured we’d score eventually,” said Shelton, a junior out of Tunstall High School. “I knew it would take more than one run to beat us.”

Allowing for a couple of rainouts, Shelton has still placed himself in a very good position to break Paul Adams’ mark of 10 home runs set last season. With 23 games left, Shelton has already improved on his freshman and sophomore years, when he hit six and seven homers, respectively.

“I worked with weights, that’s all,” said the big catcher, but Humphreys credited Shelton’s ability go to go to right field for his success this season. “Here, if you hit it to right, you have a chance,” said Humphreys. “A lot of our guys — and most of them are right-handed — have the tendency to get out in front of the ball when they have a slump.

“That’s why it didn’t surprise me that Wayne hit the home run today. The conditions weren’t that good, but he’s always been an aggressive hitter.”

Shelton also had a part in the route-going performance by Rhodes, who pitched a three-hitter and came as close as anyone to pitching the Hokies’ first shutout of the season.

Virginia Tech 6, Marshall 2

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