Gobbler
Streak
Now 29
By JAC HOLACZYK
Sports Writer
KINGSPORT, Tenn. — Wednesday night, somebody asked Virginia Tech Coach Bob Humphreys if his streaking baseball team is ranked.

“I don’t know,” laughed Humphreys, standing near the third base line at J. Fred Johnson Stadium. “But tonight, we were pretty rank.”

But the fact that Humphreys was able to joke about his team’s mortar missile schedule shows that something has finally gone right on what was a long night for the graycoats.

In the 13th inning, Steve Dodd’s sacrifice fly scored Dennis Duff as the Gobblers stretched their winning streak to 29 straight games with a 4-3 triumph over the Mountaineers.

“Sometimes, we don’t run the bases like a team that wants to get into the NCAA,” said Humphreys. “Last night after the Gobblers outlasted the Vols in a game that bat- tled Richard Nixon on TV and singer Tom Jones in concert in Johnson City. “But we win, and that’s what counts.

“No, the NCAA looks, they don’t look at how you run the bases. They want to know your record.”

Tech shows a 2-7 mark, a figure that won’t change before Sunday, and once Monday when the first decisions are made about the NCAA’s Atlantic Regional field.

But Wednesday night, the Gobblers had troubles hitting through the pitching of the offerings of UT righthanders Gary Rivers and Randy Helton.

Rivers left after five innings with a 2-1 lead in favor of Helton, who quickly appeared to believe in Thomas Wolfe’s book Yon, Yon, Go Home Again. Helton, playing on the same field on which he starred for Dobyns-Bennett High School, walked in two Tech runs in his first inning of work.

Tech took a 4-3 lead into the bottom of the ninth, but couldn’t sustain the prosperity. With one out, the Vols’ all-Southeastern Conference second baseman Robbie Howard singled to left and Buck Bundesliga Dickerson—who came in relief of Jim Pug- liis in the sixth—caused a popup from Brad Branshaw for the second.

The Gobblers were ready to run on the field in celebration when David Mitchell hit a bouncer towards second and Dan Griel waited for the ball.

But Griel fumbled the in-between hop for his 19th error of the year, and UT designated hitter Mike Huiskison promptly tied the score, 4-4, with a line-drive double down the leftfield line that sent Howard home.

Then, Helton and Dickerson settled into a pitchers’ duel. Helton retired the first 19 batters in one stretch until Duff singled to center with one out in the 13th. Duff stole second for his 14th steal of the season and came to third when Kent Matthews—Tennessee’s third string catcher—threw the ball into centerfield. Dickerson’s fly to deep left then put Tech on top.

Dickerson then stopped the Vols in their half of 13th, ending Tech’s longest game of the year and earning his ninth win, a new school record.

But Tech was saved several times by the fact that the Gobblers’ home team, the King- port Braves of the Appalachian League currently does not have a fence from dead centerfield. Since Tech is about 500 feet from the plate to the left field fence.