Six weeks ago, Bob Humphreys—the normally-opinionated Virginia Tech base-
ball coach—gave a rather normal opinion.

"This team's going to win 30 games," 
said Humphreys, whose Gobblers were 
then lagging along with a 2-7 record.

"Right, Bob," we all snickered. And 
the Toronto Blue Jays are going to win 
the American League championship.

It was also six weeks ago that Humph-
reys' team last ended up on the back end 
of the score. And with 26 consecutive victo-
ries, Tech is waiting for its second straight 
NCAA Tournament berth.

Some of us will be blown away Monday, 
and one reliable source who follows college 
baseball like most males follow Charlie's 
Angels says the Gobblers should be sitting 
by the phone, waiting for the call. In fact, 
this source says that Tech will be the Staten 
Island Regional, an Atlanta at-large entry.

Starting May 20, 34 teams will be trying to 
repeat the eight-team College World Series, 
set June 10-16 in Omaha. The Gob-
blers figure to be among that group, but 
our source says Madison will be on the out-
side looking in.

The Gobblers, with one of the most-po
tent hitting teams in Division I, lost two 
games during their last week of competi-
tion and the drop to a 32-9 record probably 
will cost Coach Brad Babcock's team an 
NCAA spot in its first Division I season.

Wake Forest and East Carolina—by 
virtue of conference championships—have 
clinched two NCAA berths, and will proba-
bly both be in the Atlantic Regional field.

In fact, Wake is given a better-than-average 
chance of making the field as the regional at 
ECU's Shore Field, home of the Carolina League's 
Winston-Salem franchise.

Virginia Tech's "comeback" perfor-
mance is impressive for many reasons, one 
of those certainly being the 29-game victory 
streak. As far as can be determined by 
NCAA officials, that accomplishment is 
currently the longest streak in collegiate 
baseball.

But the Gobblers will need to reach—
and win—the NCAA regional to achieve the 
record winning streak of 34 games estab-
lished this season by Texas. Seems the 
Longhorns ripped off a 34-game record to start 
the campaign. And people think the 
Dawgs are hot.

Tech reach the final 34, it will 
have survived for the second straight year 
in an area of the country where college 
baseball has for the last 10 decades been the 
finest played on a wide-ranging scope.

Last year, six Southeastern indepen-
dents made the NCAA's final 32—Tech, 
South Carolina, Jacksonville, Florida State, 
Miami and South Alabama. This season, 
there are 14 Southeastern independents playing 
a .640 percentage or better. And 
while conference runups are eligible 
for the NCAA playoffs, you won't find any in 
either the Atlantic or South fields. In fact, 
one independent—the University of New 
Orleans—has only the best record in the 
remaining six regional fields, and will end up playing in the 
South Central Regional with Texas.

Good luck, Privates.

Besides the Atlantic, South and South-
Central fields, other regions are labeled 
Northeast, Midwest, Rocky Moun-
tain and West. All will have four entrants 
except the Northeast, where six are permit-
ted because of a recent reduction in num-
ber of regions.

One team that could benefit from the 
Northeast "expansion" is Clemson. The 
Tigers were all set to win the Atlantic 
Coast Conference a couple weeks ago, 
which would have been the deciding 
factor in placing them in the Mid-
Atlantic Regional rather than in the 
South Central Regional with Texas.

Clemson, a 357 record and 
must go begging.

Chal Port, baseball coach at The Clas-
el, is the chairman of the NCAA Baseball 
Committee and also heads up the advisory 
committee that oversees 57 Division I 
teams in the Southeastern area. On 
Sunday, Port will discuss things with five advisory 
committee members, making plans on 
what he will take to the national selection 
body that makes decisions via conference 
phone conference call at 11 a.m. Monday...

It's basically a numbers game. "The 
NCAA looks at your record," says Hum-
phreys. "And when they look, they won't 
find many better than the one owned by 
our team.

Overall, Humphreys' 1976 tournament 
entrance—which lost its first two games in the 
regional (both by one run), but proba-
bly a better club. But with lots of followers 
from a year ago, the Gobblers have learned 
how to win. And their pitching has im-
proved to the point where Humphreys—
the ex-major league hurler—doesn't make 
jokes about it anymore.

To win in baseball, a team has to 
receive a certain amount of luck. It hasn't 
been that way for the Gobblers until Wednesday's 5-4 triumph over Tennessee in 
13 innings at Kingsport. Tech made enough 
mistakes that night to lose two games, 
but ended up making the Big Orange see red 
for the Gobblers, because playing a game 
that doesn't count amidst the pressure of 
a winning streak has to spell relief.

After pondering why Tech has won 29 
in a row, it's still necessary to figure out 
how they've done it. The Gobblers have a 
bit of hitting, but they're not the图纸 
stopshort (Skip Doffenmeyer) not even 
fitting his weight, and a second baseman 
(Glen Gris) with 19 errors.

Clearly, those facts and figures couldn't 
belong to one of the top 34 teams in the 
country. But Monday afternoon, that's 
distinct Virginia Tech will probably en-
joy.

Remember, stranger events have taken 
place—like six weeks ago when Humphreys 
spoke of 30 wins and heard only laughter.

Tech's Chance for NCAA Bid Enhanced by 'Comeback'