Florida Wins in NCAA

Tech ‘Embarassing, Ridiculous’

By JACK BOGACZYK
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MINNEAPOLIS — If the College World Series is a dream, then the NCAA regional baseball playoffs must be a nightmare for Virginia Tech.

Saturday morning at Bierman Field, the Gobblers became the first team eliminated from the NCAA Mideast Regional in a 9-4 losers bracket loss to Florida. And for the second straight year, Coach Bob Humphreys’ team lasted less than 24 hours in post-season competition.

“It was embarrassing, I guarantee you,” said Humphreys, after Tech had outhit the Gators, 9-8, but suffered from poor pitching and “fundamentals” in the outfield. “Our outfielders were falling all over the place. And what can you say about the pitching?”

At the start of a season that was to include a 31-game winning streak, Humphreys worried about the Gobblers’ mound corps. But the Tech hurlers finished the season ranked fifth nationally in earned run average.

On Saturday, however, freshman left-hander Mike Rhodes walked the first two Gators in each of the first three innings. Tech overcame Florida’s first inning 2-0 edge with three runs in the third, but a bloopy double by Gator leftfielder Frank McDonald scored the first two batters that Rhodes walked in the bottom of the second. Tech never again led, and went home with a 3-4-9 record.

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was. The Gobblers got to Florida righthander Ron Crum early and pounded the ball all over the park.

But after a three-run second produced by four straight hits, Tech’s lone tally came on a two-out, ninth-inning homer by freshman first baseman Harold Williams. Crum survived on good control, as he didn’t walk a batter in going the distance.

Williams, batting eighth in the Gobblers’ order, had a big day as he capped the three-run second with a double off the leftfield wall to produce two runs.

With one out in the second, Dennis Duff doubled and Steve Dodd singled. Designated hitter Mike Preisser doubled to left-center to score Duff, then Williams erased Florida’s 2-0 lead with his two-bagger.

While Williams was hot for Tech, McDonald carried the Gators. The junior leftfielder, who made two spectacular catches in Florida’s Friday loss to Minnesota, cracked a two-run homer in the sixth in addition to his bloop double in the second. That gave him four RBIs—not bad for a player who was a bench-warmer at the start of the season.

Humphreys went to righthander Tim Puglisi after Rhodes was yanked, and the relief man was touched for three runs. Puglisi, twin brother of fellow Tech moundman Jim Puglisi, went four innings. He had made only two previous appearances this year, going a total of 1.0 innings. The win carried the Gators to 38-17.

“Then what happens when you have to go to a freshman like that,” said Humphreys of Rhodes’ shaky performance. “He was scared to death. The first time I went out there to talk to him, he was shaking like a leaf.

“But what else can you do? Who do you pitch? The guy with the best stuff has a bad arm. (Bobby) Fisher pitched Friday and in his second inning he told (catcher Wayne) Shelton that he was tired.”

-Duke Dickerson pitched Friday. And then there’s Jimmy Puglisi, but you gotta save somebody to pitch the next game. If you’re not gonna win them all, then what good does it to win the first one?”

At the plate, Tech’s performance was just the opposite of Friday’s four-hit, 2-1, loss to the Chippe-