



Photo by Dustin Stuart- Photography Editor

Sophomore pitcher Dean Roland throws a pitch to VMI on March 18.

Bulldog baseball drops series to Presbyterian

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UNC Asheville's baseball team snapped a five game losing streak, but dropped the ball in their three-game series at conference rival Presbyterian College over the weekend.

After being shut out 5-0 on Friday, the Bulldogs were able to battle back and win 5-3 on Saturday, before dropping Sunday's finale 6-2.

"We've been getting a lot of runners on base and just leaving them there. We haven't been able to get runners in from third base with less than two outs," **Head Coach Tom Smith** said.

Before winning on Saturday, the Bulldogs suffered five straight losses, four coming at the hands of conference rivals, and two coming in extra innings.

Over that stretch, the Bulldogs were outscored 36-5.

"We've just been in a team slump for about the past 10 days," Smith said.

Thomas Bess, a freshman from Cherryville, N.C., did not struggle against Presbyterian, recording five hits during the series and driving in two runs on Saturday.

"Thomas is a freshman who has gained a lot from early season experience this year," Smith said. "He's able to hit, steal bases and has played excellent defense for us as well."

Smith said clutch hits from Bess and senior Jordan Lurie were key in snapping the Bulldogs' recent skid.

"Jordan came up with two outs and runners on base and he was able to get them in," Smith said.

Trailing 3-0 in the top of the seventh, the Bulldogs rode RBI hits from Lurie and Bess to tie the game at three.

In the ninth inning, it was Bess and Lurie coming up big

again to drive in the winning run and another insurance run.

Hovering just below .500, the Bulldogs are intent on competing in the Big South Conference this year, Bess said.

"I think I speak for everyone on the team when I say that we're here to try and win the conference," the center fielder said. "We have the talent. We don't need to rebuild."

The Bulldogs stand at 13-16 overall and 4-5 in league play.

Smith said the lack of run support has placed too much pressure on the Bulldogs' pitching staff.

"With us hitting the way we are, that is asking our pitchers to pitch perfect, which isn't really fair," Smith said.

Sophomore Dean Rowland leads the Bulldogs' pitching staff with a 4-2 record and a 3.65 ERA.

Sunday's 6-2 loss in Clinton, S.C., was a prime example of UNCA's bats faltering.

The Bulldogs generated only six hits, and four of them came in the first three innings.

The Bulldogs led the Blue Hose 2-0 after the top of the third, before Presbyterian tied it in the bottom of the fourth and then scored four runs in the bottom of the eighth to bury the visitors.

"We need to stop putting pressure on ourselves at the plate. We have to loosen up with runners on base so we can get hits and bring them in," Bess said.

Smith agreed and said practicing fundamentals is important for the coming weeks.

"The bats are just cold right now. We have to get back to work and back to basics to get things going at the plate," Smith said.

The Bulldogs traveled to Furman University on Tuesday and will host Charleston Southern for a three-game conference stand on Saturday.

Bulldog Scorecard

Baseball

- March 28 vs. Wofford **3-4 (L)**
- Friday vs. Presbyterian **0-5 (L)**
- Saturday vs. Presbyterian **5-3(W)**
- Sunday vs. Presbyterian **2-6(L)**

Tennis

- Friday vs. Charleston Southern Men **0-7 (L)**
- Friday vs. Charleston Southern Women **0-7 (L)**