

Chick makes a big hit in summer league

By R.L. Bynum
Sports Editor

In Detroit, they have their 'Bird', a skinny, crowd pleasing right-handed pitcher named Mark Fidrych. At Carolina, though, they have made an acquisition this summer that has delighted Tar Heel baseball fans, and perhaps has helped attract new college baseball fans.

His name is Rich Yonakor, better known to his friends as 'Chickie'. The enthusiastic junior from Euclid, Ohio has been playing baseball since he was nine years old. In high school one year, he led his school's team to the Ohio state regionals, and was named to the all-state team.

Having played so well before, it would naturally follow that he would play ball in college. However, runover of basketball's season usually doesn't permit him to participate in baseball.

In his freshman year, he played on the nationally ranked second place basketball team and didn't finish his cage season until late March. By that time, the college baseball season was halfway over, so he played a half year of Junior Varsity baseball.

This year, Rich had to sit out the regular baseball season while he recovered from a basketball injury.

The summer, however has turned out to be a different story. "I wanted to play during the summer, so I figured as long as I'm stayin' around here, I might as well see if they would let me play," he said. He had to drop two courses after he had surgery in the spring and is attending summer school to make them up.

Yonakor has been playing mostly at first base and has made three appearances on the mound. When the southpaw is pitching, he is a towering figure. The likes of which have not been seen here since another two-sport man, N.C. State's Tim Stoddard (now with the Baltimore Orioles) was playing in the area.

Rich said that he's able to use his height to his advantage.

"I can use a big wind-up and a lot of motion. The batters have not seen that and aren't used to it. I'm not striking a lot of guys out, but the guys out on the field are making some good plays to help me out," he said.

Last Saturday, Yonakor won his first game of the season, without a loss. He went the distance while scattering nine hits to win over Campbell 4-3. "I had 4 strike-outs. So you can tell that the defense was really good because it really helped me out. There were a couple of gap shots that the outfielders ran down. And some hard-hit balls in the infield that the guys just knocked down and hung with and got over to first in

time. I think the defense was so above par that day that that's the reason we won," he said.

Rich says that he depends basically on two types of pitches. "I mostly rely on submarine pitch that's kind of hard

he quickly pointed out there is less pressure playing baseball in the summer league than in the rigorous ACC basketball schedule. "Right now there's not as much pressure in the summer league. We are out there to

win, but also to have a good time. It's the same way in basketball, but here, it's a national thing, and there's more pressure. In the summer league we are just playing teams inside the state," he said.



Rich Yonakor

Staff photo by Allen Jernigan

to see right away. When I can get my curve over, sometimes it's effective. But the other night, I had trouble. So when the curve isn't working, I rely on the sub," he said.

In the 14 innings that he has pitched, Rich has given up only a pair of earned runs and has thrown nine strike-outs.

When he is playing at first base, his height helps him. "Being tall is really the best advantage I have over there, because nobody can out-stretch me out there," he said. Many line drives that are too high for most first-sackers, can sometimes be grabbed by Yonakor also.

At the plate this summer, Rich leads the team in the home run department. He has smacked three round-trippers and is ahead of Kevin Caddell and J.D. Henderson who have both knocked two out of the park.

Although he has only a .217 average, he has struck out just once this season.

"I open up a whole lot," Rich said, "and choke up on the bat so I can just punch at the ball and hit it somewhere. If you have men on base and you strike out, you're not going to move them. If you make the other team play with the ball, sometimes they can make errors."

"I make better contact when I do that. My lack of strike-outs shows that it really helps me. If I took a full cut, I might strike out and end the inning. I've just always done it."

In comparing baseball to basketball,

Heels battle Campbell tonight

Carolina's baseball team had an up and down week as they split a pair of games with league leader Louisburg and defeated Campbell, setting their record at 11-7, 3½ games behind Louisburg.

Friday night, the Tar Heels ran into a "Hurricane" as Len Bradley handcuffed Carolina batters, giving up only one run which raised his record to 6-1. Otis Nixon's two run home run in the ninth was the clincher as the Heels fell, 8-6.

The Tar Heels bounced back Saturday night though, as they nipped Campbell 4-3. J.D. Henderson and Larry Gates led the hitting attack, with two hits a piece. Rich Yonakor took the win to put his record at 1-0 (see related story).

Carolina finally got their revenge on Louisburg Sunday night when they whipped the Hurricanes 11-4. David Kirk hurled the win to trim his ERA to a microscopic 1.00 and put his record at a perfect 5-0.

Rich Yonakor, J.D. Henderson, and Phil Griffith led the 12 hit attack. Griffith went 2 for 4 with four RBI's in the game, while Henderson was 2 for 5 and knocked in three RBI's.

Carolina will be in action again at Boshamer Stadium tonight when they will tangle with Campbell at 7:30. Mike Brewer is scheduled to be the starting pitcher for Heels.

—R.L. Bynum



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