

B.J. Surhoff courting Olympics, pro scouts

By LEE ROBERTS
Staff Writer

Editor's note: This is the first in a series on UNC athletes contending for a place on the 1984 U.S. Olympic team.

A scout for the Toronto Blue Jays was sitting in the press box during Monday's North Carolina-East Carolina baseball game at Boshamer Stadium.

When somebody asked if he was there to watch UNC's star catcher B.J. Surhoff, the scout replied, "Every team in the major leagues is looking at Surhoff."

And why not? The sophomore sensation from Rye, N.Y. is hitting a whopping .452 to lead the No. 4 Tar Heels to a 30-8 mark with two weeks to go in the regular season. With a batting average like that anyone is bound to be confident, and Surhoff is no exception.

"I feel real good at the plate," Surhoff said on a rare off-day for the Tar Heels. "I feel like I can hit off any pitcher that's out there."

Surhoff said there have been a few times this year when he felt so good that he just knew he could hit the ball out of the park. Take, for example, the Maryland game on March 25. Surhoff led off for the Tar Heels in the bottom of the first, and he got that feeling. Especially after the home plate umpire called a strike on a three-one pitch that Surhoff and the rest of the Boshamer Stadium crowd felt was low and outside. On Terapin pitcher Mike Romanovsky's next pitch, Surhoff sent the ball high and outside the park.

Last season, Surhoff set a North Carolina batting record by hitting .386 as

a freshman and was named to *Baseball America's* Freshman All-American team. This season, Surhoff attained first team pre-season All-American status as only a sophomore, and he has promised that his average would not dip below .400, as it did late last year.

"I think I can stay in the .400-.450 range this season," Surhoff said. "I'd be disappointed if I didn't. No one so far has shown to me that I can't hit that well."

The North Carolina coaching staff agrees. Head coach Mike Roberts called Surhoff "one of the best players in the country," and UNC assistant coach Howard McCullough had even more to say.

"B.J. has a good makeup," McCullough said. "He's never complacent; he always strives to be better. He's got more baseball ability than anyone I've ever seen."

None of this should be surprising to anyone who knows Surhoff. The 6-1, 185-pound catcher comes from athletic stock. His father played pro basketball for the New York Knicks, his brother pitches in the Philadelphia Phillies farm system and his sister played volleyball and softball at Iona College.

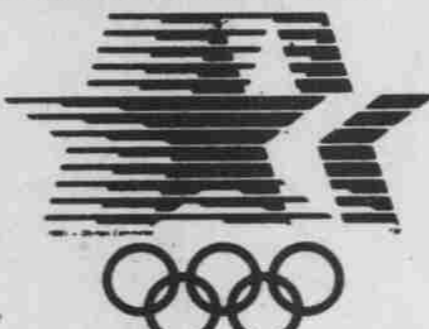
Surhoff followed in their footsteps to become All-State in football, basketball and baseball. He topped off his high school athletic career by being named New York *Daily News* athlete, spring athlete and baseball player of the year.

Despite his many natural athletic abilities, Surhoff works harder every day to improve himself — and that shows on the playing field.

"I feel very fortunate that I have a lot of natural ability," Surhoff said. "But it didn't all just come to me. I put time and work into whatever sport I play and I hope to get better each year."

One key to Surhoff's improvement as a baseball player over the last year was his involvement in the Pan American Games last summer. Former American League all-star shortstop Chico Carrasquel believed Surhoff was the best player in the Pan Am Games.

"I learned a lot about different styles of play in different countries," Surhoff said. "It was fun to see a lot of guys who played high-caliber baseball and to see how I stacked up against them."



Surhoff stacked up rather well, hitting .429 in 10 games and helping to lead the American team to the bronze medal. And the Pan American experience earned Surhoff many points in the eyes of the selection committee for the 1984 U.S. Olympic baseball team. Baseball will be an exhibition sport this year, but is tentatively scheduled to be a regular points event in the 1988 Games. Surhoff was one of only eight unanimous selections to the preliminary 44-man Olympic roster.

McCullough was the regional coordinator of the Olympic tryouts in the Southeast Region at Duke University last fall, and he liked what he saw in Surhoff.

"In the tryout at Duke, B.J. was easily the top player out there," McCullough said. "He's definitely one of the top two

or three amateur players in the country."

Surhoff is not officially on the Olympic team yet, but McCullough said that unless Surhoff is hurt, he will be in Los Angeles come July.

"Ever since I heard about baseball coming to the Olympics, I've thought that winning an Olympic medal was becoming more of a reality," Surhoff said. "The closer it gets, the more excited you get about it."

Surhoff said that having the chance to represent his country in the Olympics is an exciting prospect.

"It makes all the work and time I've put into playing worth it," he said. "We'll have to play with a lot of pride, because baseball is the American pastime, and we want to show the world we're still the best at our game."

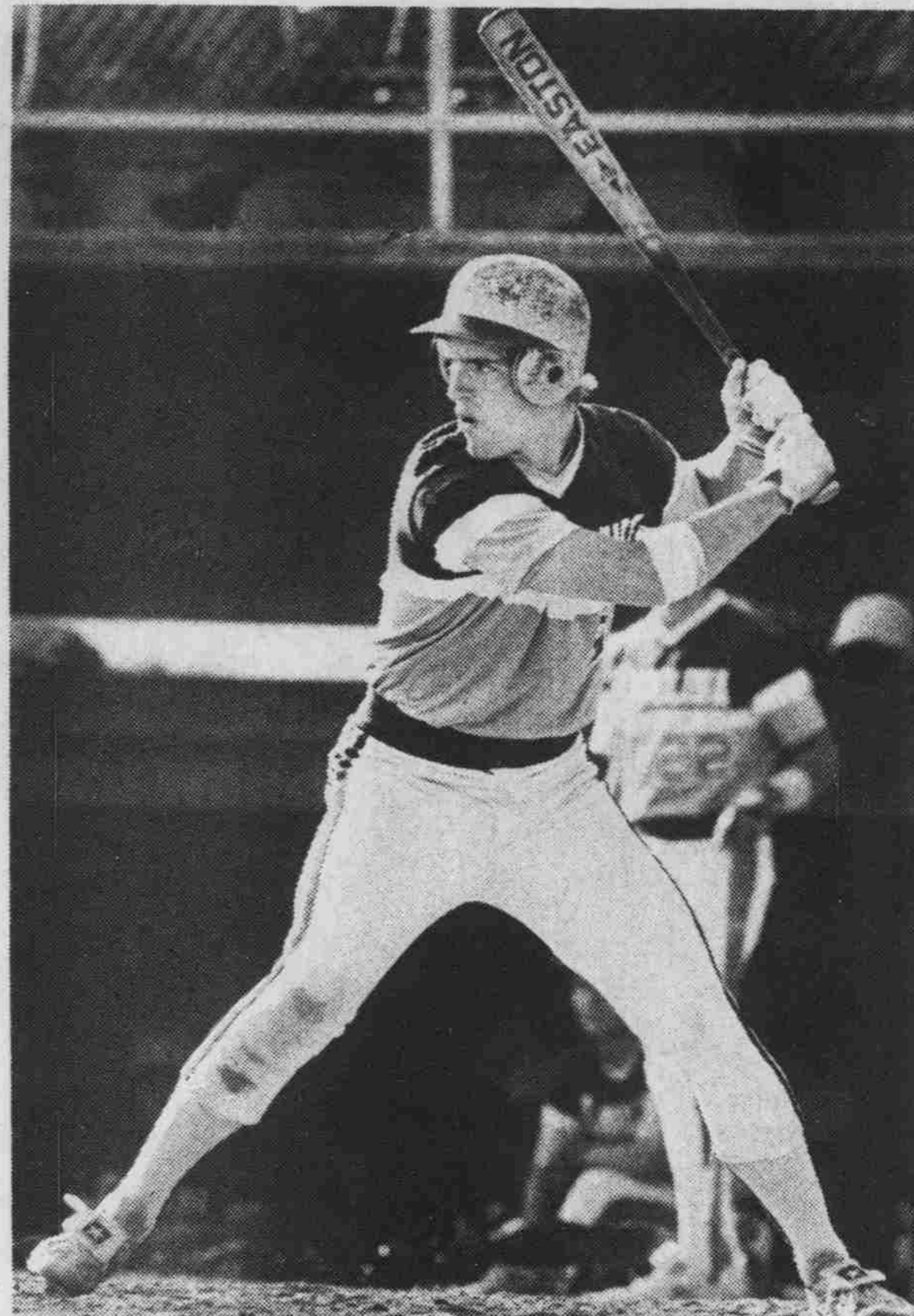
Whatever happens in the Olympics, McCullough is certain that Surhoff will do his country proud.

"For someone who's gotten as much recognition as B.J. has, it's very easy to put your head higher than everyone else," McCullough said. "But the kid is as humble as the day he walked in the door."

To top all that off, there has even been talk lately — purely speculative — about Surhoff being able to play in the major leagues. Roberts and McCullough believe the blond-haired whiz could play professionally tomorrow.

"He has the two things most important to making the major leagues," McCullough said. "He has a great arm and he's got fine speed. Major league people know they can't teach that. Getting over the initial awe of playing in the majors, I think he might struggle as a hitter — all young players do — but I could see the kid doing pretty well."

These days, it's hard to imagine B.J. Surhoff not doing anything pretty well.



B.J. Surhoff has drawn great interest from major league scouts

Tix distribution discussed

By MIKE ALLEN
Staff Writer

Proposals to change the football ticket distribution system are being considered in order to streamline ticket office operations, according to ticket office manager Ken Brown.

Brown said Tuesday that he and Carolina Athletic Association President Jennie Edmondson met to discuss alternative ways to distribute football tickets, but stressed that nothing would be decided until sufficient student feedback was received.

"What we really want is student opinion. We will not change anything without student input," Brown said.

One plan being considered is a priority system in which seniors would get the best seats, followed by juniors, sophomores

and freshmen. Brown said Clemson used a similar system that had gone over very well with the students.

According to Brown, there was a problem created by trying to put tickets in envelopes at short notice. "It takes an average of two days to put the tickets in the envelopes," Brown said. He added that he and Edmondson discussed stuffing the envelopes sometime during the summer to avoid last-minute rush.

Both Brown and Edmondson agreed that as of now the system would not change without strong student support for the new proposal.

Students wishing to offer opinions or alternate plans may do so by writing a note or calling the CAA. Go by Room 2151, Suite A of the Carolina Union or call 962-4300.

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