

Sports

Russian baseball team shows spirit but loses, 13-2



USSR's catcher Nikolai Gervesev waits to tag UNC's Ryan Howison at home in Heels' 13-2 win

Players exchange pointers, hugs in international affair

By MARK ANDERSON
Staff Writer

Beisbol has not come easily to the USSR. Their bateadors could manage only two kvhits and two, well, kvruns. That was the Soviet National Team's line score in yesterday's baseball game at Boshamer Stadium. North Carolina countered with 13 runs and 12 hits. But no one really cared about the stats.

"The best thing has been people greeting me in the street and welcoming me," said pitcher Edmundas Matusyavichus.

This camaraderie was as important as the action on the field. The players exchanged gifts, tried to communicate as well as they could and ran around posing together in team and individual pictures for their scrapbooks.

The USSR lost its fifth consecutive game by a large margin on this Inaugural Baseball Series with the United States, but the players and coaches seem unfazed.

"We understand that we have a lot to learn," said Soviet head coach Alexander Ardatov.

The Tar Heels did their best to help with that, too.

"I pitched them about an hour of batting practice," said UNC coach Mike Roberts. "Ron Maurer (North Carolina shortstop) spent a lot of time with their shortstop trying to teach him to field the ball out in front of him."

The most experienced Soviet players have only played baseball for two years, and all have been converted from other sports. Unfortunately, this lack of playing time showed on the field, which, with six USSR errors, often resembled a Little League game. Soviet players overran bases without sliding and threw the ball into the outfield while firing it around the infield after an out.

The Tar Heels did their best not to rub it in, playing everyone and

often failing to take the extra base. Bobby Honeycutt summed up UNC's attitude when he caught Leonid Komeyev off third base in the eighth inning. Instead of just slapping on the tag, Honeycutt gave Komeyev a big hug.

"At this point, you have to compare them to young teen-agers in America," Roberts said. "Their knowledge of the game is pretty good, but they still have some questions. Baseball is such an instinct sport with the hand-eye coordination. You really have to start at five or six years old."

Soviet baseball for children will begin next year, and Ardatov seconded Roberts' opinion.

"The best way we can improve is to have kids grow up with the game like they do in America," he said.

The Soviets have quickly picked up some of the more important traits of the game, such as tipping their hats to the crowd, kicking dirt in the batter's box and stepping out after every pitch (even though they didn't use signs). Several players on the bench could also be seen spitting huge wads of tobacco.

"The tour is a great thing because baseball is coming on worldwide," Roberts said. "Now that it's an Olympic sport, more countries will be picking it up."

The subject of international competition was greeted with some trepidation by the Soviets.

"1992 (Olympics) are too soon," Matusyavichus said.

"It will be eight to 10 years before we can compete," Ardatov said.

Assistant coach Guela Chihradze elaborated on the disadvantages facing the Soviet team.

"We have few fields and no good native coaches," he said. "We think it's great that the Cubans and Nicaraguans have helped us and also the Americans."

Many scientists have said that

hitting a baseball is the toughest task in sports. With 14 strikeouts Monday, the Soviets would have to agree.

"We have no pitching machines like here, and we don't have enough baseballs," Chihradze said. "The IBA (International Baseball Association) and the U.S. have helped us with equipment."

Despite giving up 13 runs, the USSR's pitching drew Roberts' compliments.

"Their pitching mechanics were good. It was obvious they had zeroed in and taught it well."

Matusyavichus was the most impressive Soviet hurler. He came on in relief to throw four innings, surrendering only one run on four hits. Amazingly, the 31-year-old right-hander saw his first baseball game only a year ago and has been playing for 11 months.

"I injured my knee and couldn't throw the javelin anymore," he said. "They told me to try pitching after I recovered, and I liked it."

The rest of the USSR's staff is also made up of converted javelin throwers.

"We are well-trained," Matusyavichus said. "Some of the U.S.'s best javelin men came from playing baseball. In our country, it is the opposite."

Learning to throw strikes has been the toughest adjustment for Matusyavichus.

"I work on four pitches in practice," he said, "but I mostly throw straight for strikes in the game."

Matusyavichus provided a clue to one of the major differences between the two countries' approaches to the game. When asked if he felt like a little boy when he played the game, he replied, "I enjoy it, but I play to extend my sport life."

Despite glimmers of hope like Matusyavichus, it is obvious that the Soviets have a long way to go on the diamond. And it won't get any easier.

Brower wins two in twin bill, ups softball's record to 28-13

By BOBBY McCROSKEY
Staff Writer

Sophomore pitcher Tracy Brower collected her third win in two days Monday as the North Carolina softball team swept a doubleheader from St. Augustine, 10-0 and 2-0.

In the first game, Brower was a pitching machine as she registered no hits, no runs, six strikeouts and one walk in five innings. While Brower provided the pitching, the UNC offense scored all the runs it would need in the first inning.

Lead-off batter Theresa Buscemi opened the scoring. She came home on a passed ball after reaching first on an infield error. Michelle Rupp then bounced a grounder to the third baseman, and the throw was mishandled by the first baseman. Vicki Parrott, who had also reached on an error by the Falcons, raced home on the fielder's choice. Tracy Beine singled and scored on a sacrifice fly to deep right field by Lisa McGloin.

Fortunately for the Falcons, the Tar Heels were not able to push any runs across the plate in the second inning. However, a third inning onslaught by the potent North Carolina offense more than made up for the temporary dry spell.

After Beine walked to start the inning, McGloin rifled a shot through the shortstop's legs, and Beine scored standing up. Gina Elmore and Julie

TV to show Kareem's final game

From Associated Press reports

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — All-time NBA scoring leader Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will get a nationally televised send-off this weekend in what is expected to be the final regular-season game of his 20-year professional career.

CBS announced it will broadcast the two-time defending NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers' season finale Sunday against the Seattle SuperSonics, team spokesman Josh Rosenfeld said Monday.

Jabbar, 42, has said he will retire after completing his second decade as a professional.

The All-Star center didn't practice Monday and underwent a back examination, but was expected to play Tuesday in a home game against the Denver Nuggets.

O'Shields both reached base, and Maggie Moline stroked a single to center field to score both runners.

St. Augustine received a glimmer of hope in the top of the fourth inning. Bernadette McPhee lined a 3-2 pitch off the glove of second baseman Sharon Paszt. That hope was quickly extinguished as Brower mowed down the next three batters that she faced to decisively end the inning.

The Tar Heels continued to pour it on in their half of the fourth inning. Michelle Rupp led off by curling one down the third base line. What looked to be a routine hit turned out to be an inside-the-park homer. Then, McGloin walked and advanced to second base on a sacrifice bunt. Brower contributed to her own cause by blooping an RBI single to center field, scoring McGloin. Buscemi then doubled Brower home to close out the scoring.

After the Falcons failed to score in the top of the fifth, the game was called because the Tar Heels had compiled a commanding 10-0 lead. It was a merciful end to a disastrous first game for St. Augustine.

"I think we did a lot of good things at the plate in the first game," UNC head coach Donna Papa said. "We made some good decisions, but of course, they made a lot of errors in the field."

Something must have happened to the Falcons before the second half of the doubleheader, because they made a game of the second contest. They came out hitting, and Papa pulled starting pitcher Maggie Moline from the mound in favor of Brower. Although they failed to score, they were able to keep the North Carolina offense in check — at least until the third inning.

In the third, Buscemi led the attack

as she looped one into left field. The Falcon fielder dropped the ball and Buscemi sped to second base. Parrott then executed a drag bunt to perfection, and Buscemi darted to third. After Beine grounded out, Rupp singled Buscemi home, but Parrott was nailed at the plate as she tried to tack on another run for the Tar Heels.

Elmore began the fourth inning by drawing a walk from the St. Augustine pitcher. O'Shields sacrificed her to second, and Elmore then stole third base. With Brower at the plate, a wild pitch was delivered, and Elmore scampered home with North Carolina's final run.

"The second game wasn't pretty," Papa said. "It was good defensively, but we were not as sharp at the plate. We're at that point of the season where I expect better decisions at the plate."

In the meantime, Brower continued to exercise her pitching mastery over the competition. With the conclusion of her second win on the day, she ran her scoreless inning streak to an impressive 25 2/3 innings. The last time she surrendered a run to the opposition was against George Mason University in the fourth inning on April 9. Her record stands at 19-6.

"I'm tired, but I felt fine on the mound," Brower said. "It was like one game with extra innings. St. Augustine stood far back in the box, so that made it seem like the distance was farther. I felt good, but it was tough to cool down (from the first game) and then to warm up for the second game."

North Carolina now takes to the road for several games before returning home April 25 to face UNC-Wilmington.

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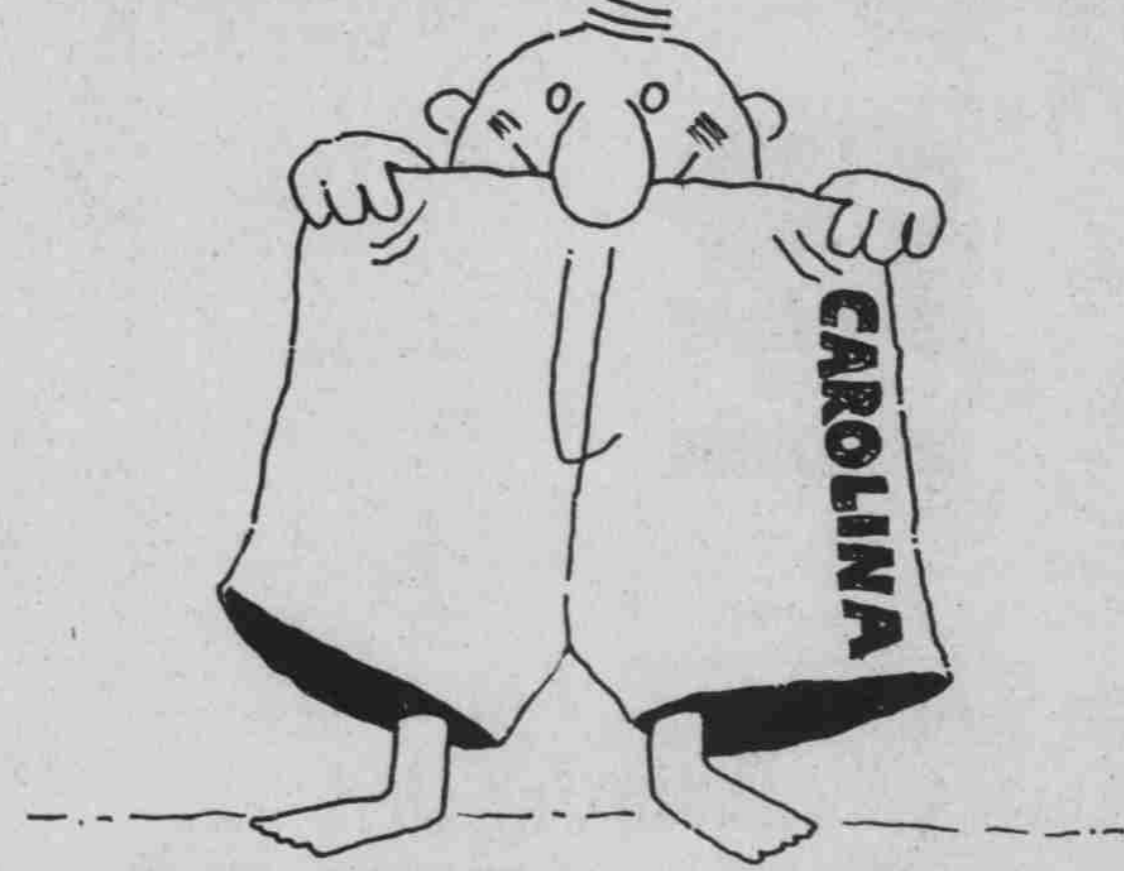
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