

Sports

Tar Heels drop two straight in Series

Losses to Florida St., Arkansas eliminate scrappy UNC squad

By REGGIE ALSTON
Staff Writer

UNC head baseball coach Mike Roberts would be the first to admit that his 1989 Tar Heel squad didn't feature a host of All-Americans or early round draft picks.

But that is hardly solace for the coach whose team was bounced from the eight-team, double-elimination College World Series in Omaha, Neb., after the minimum number of games.

"We're not satisfied," said Roberts, back in Chapel Hill after his eighth-seeded team was eliminated by losses to top-seeded Florida State 4-2 on June 2, and to fifth-seeded Arkansas 7-3 two days later. "We knew we had opportunities to win."

Opportunity number one came in the form of an early lead against FSU with Tar Heel ace John Thoden on the mound.

After center fielder Tom Nevin grounded out to start the game, UNC got back-to-back singles from designated hitter Brad Woodall and right fielder Ron Maurer, and a walk to catcher Jesse Levis to load the bases against Seminole starting pitcher Gar Finnvolv.

The next batter, second baseman Dave Arendas, rocketed a pitch up the middle that deflected off Finnvolv's glove to the shortstop, who stepped on second to force Levis as Woodall scored. Todd Nichols flied out to center to end the inning.

"That first inning was the turning point in the game," said UNC pitching coach Mark Halvorsen. "If that ball goes by (Finnvolv) it's a base hit, we score a second run and save ourselves an out."

"Against a team like Florida State we knew one run wasn't going to be enough, but (scoring first) gives you momentum."

South Regional MVP Thoden, 12-0 with a 2.35 ERA heading into the

CWS, could not hold the momentum or the lead very long as FSU designated hitter Buddy Crib blasted an 0-1 offering over the Rosenblatt Stadium right-field wall to tie the score in the bottom of the second.

The Seminoles added two more earned runs in the third and an unearned run in the seventh to lead 4-1.

Meanwhile, Finnvolv, 9-3 with a 2.55 ERA before the CWS, settled down after the first and stymied the North Carolina bats, facing the minimum number of batters through the seventh.

UNC rallied in the eighth behind a lead-off single by right fielder Darren Villani and a walk to shortstop Steve Estroff. After a successful sacrifice bunt by third baseman Ryan Howison chased Finnvolv, hard-throwing bullpen stopper Bruce Kimball hit Maurer with a 3-2 fastball to load the bases.

Woodall then hit a sacrifice fly to center to score Villani.

Kimball retired the batters in order in the ninth to notch his ninth save.

"Thoden pitched very, very well for us," said Halvorsen. "He probably wouldn't admit it, but he was probably physically worn out. His stuff and his control were not as sharp. His location and mental approach kept him in the game."

Opportunity number two came in the form of a trick play the Tar Heels used successfully five times this spring.

With a runner on second, two out, and the score tied 3-3 in the bottom of the eighth against Arkansas, North Carolina pulled the old hidden-ball trick to get out of the inning — or so it seemed.

After a conference at the mound, second baseman Arendas returned to his position with the ball and tagged the Razorbacks' Greg D'Alexander



The Tar Heels were down and out after Arkansas eliminated them from the College World Series

when he strayed off base. But home plate umpire Bruce Ravan said he had called timeout to dust home plate, wiping out the play.

The rules state that once a timeout is called, the ball cannot be put in play until the pitcher is holding it while standing on the rubber.

Arkansas broke the game open after the controversy with four runs on four hits off Jim Dougherty, who was in relief of starter, and losing pitcher Michael Hoog, 3-5.

Mike Oquist, 10-5, got the win in relief.

"We certainly didn't lose the world series because of a timeout," said

Halvorsen. "We had our opportunities, we just didn't cash in."

"Give credit to Arkansas; they struggled at first, but they handled (Hoog) the way they had to — wait on his pitches and go to the opposite field some."

Said Roberts, whose Tar Heels finished the season with a 41-18-1 record, the third most wins in school history: "It's just one of those things. The other three umpires didn't know time had been called. I guess our timing was not good."

"But I don't want to take anything away from Arkansas, they're a great team."

Roberts had some praise for his own spirited team.

"Physically we're average in many ways, but we had great team chemistry and a winning attitude," Roberts said. "John Thoden and Jesse Levis gave a lot of leadership."

"(We proved) it doesn't take five superstars and three first-round draft picks to go to the College World Series. It takes youngsters who care about each other and play well together."



Dive in or Carry out.

PEPPER'S PIZZA

127 E. Franklin St.
between Varsity Theater & Record Bar
967-7766

We'll Put the Finishing Touch on your Apartment!!

You can choose two from:

- a dry bar
- ceiling fan
- miniblinds
- designer wallpaper
- microwave

2 bedroom \$385 • 3 bedroom \$500

Come Home To

CAROLINA APARTMENTS

...under new on-site management

Hwy 54 Bypass • 929-2139