

Baseball 3-5 as SoCon play starts

Andrew High
Sports Editor

The Phoenix Baseball team rebounded from three consecutive losses to North Carolina State University over the weekend to beat visiting UNC-Wilmington 5-4. The game lifted the Phoenix to 3-5 heading into a weekend series against Appalachian State.

Baseball head coach Mike Kennedy said the win was important from a confidence standpoint. The Phoenix were outscored 26-8 in its three games against NC State.

"NC State is ranked 22nd in the country," he said. "They're a good ball club. We could've won two of those games. We're not as bad as people make it out to be. That was a good win today and obviously beating Wilmington twice is huge for us. We recruit against those guys. We needed something positive going into conference play."

Matt McSwain, a freshman right-handed pitcher, controlled the first half of the game for the Phoenix. He went five and two-thirds innings, giv-

ing up two runs. McSwain also struck out nine batters on 110 pitches and gave up two walks.

"He was outstanding," Kennedy said. "We knew coming in that he was going to be pretty good for us. It's just a matter of getting our guys some mound time, with the weather."

Kennedy said even though McSwain's performance was excellent he doesn't expect to leave him—or other starting pitchers—in too deep into ballgames saying that their arms must gradually adjust to the strain of long outings. Kennedy, however, said he was impressed by McSwain's nine strikeouts.

"He's got good stuff," Kennedy said. "His breaking pitch is very good and today he had a great change-up. If he throws those in there, he's got a chance to strike out a lot of guys. In high school he threw a perfect game. So, he's got good stuff."

In the Phoenix half of the fifth inning, the team scored three runs on no hits. After walking the bases loaded, the Seahawks walked in a run. The Phoenix scored again when junior catcher Grant Rembert was hit

by a pitch. The team got its final run of the inning on a sacrifice fly by shortstop Tyler Stevens.

Kennedy said that inning exemplified a new rule the team put in after manufacturing only eight runs in its series against NC State: Be patient.

"We felt like NC State had a great approach," he said. "They took a lot of pitches and ended up getting walks. So, if they got a knock, they'd get a few runs in where we'd have to string a bunch of hits together because we haven't been getting anybody on base."

Kennedy said he and the base coaches were actively telling batters to take pitches.

"We had some rules in today for about six of our hitters," he said. "They had to take until they got a strike. There was a purpose for that and it paid off. Five runs on three hits is pretty impressive and that's what we're trying to get across to our kids."

Heading into the three game series against Appalachian State, Kennedy said he expects to leave the rule in place.



Jeff Heyer / Photographer

Freshman Matt McSwain pitches during the Phoenix's game against UNC-Wilmington. McSwain struck out nine in what baseball coach Mike Kennedy called the best performance of the year.

"It's an approach that we're trying to get our kids to buy into," he said. "If we change based on who we play, it's not going to work for us down the road. We'll probably have four or five guys that we'll have take pitches until they get strikes, and if there's a guy in scoring position we might lift that because we're going to try to make some guys throw some pitches."

Despite success at the plate, fielding woes have plagued the team. Kennedy said he expects his team's defense to get better as the season

goes on. The team has made 19 errors in eight games.

"I just think it's concentration," Kennedy said. "I think they're starting to think about the errors instead of just going out and playing. We're trying to tell those guys 'just play the game. Mistakes happen but, don't make them because you're worried about something else or the last [error].'"

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Softball tops Akron, NC A&T, Robert Morris in Elon Invitational

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The slap of ball against leather, the ping of the bat on a fouled off pitch and the sunflower seeds spitting out of the mouths of spectators; these are the signs of spring. All these and more were present last weekend as Elon's softball team played host to four other colleges in the third annual Elon Invitational.

The Phoenix compiled a 3-2

record in the tournament, notching wins over Akron, North Carolina A&T and Robert Morris College. The Phoenix fell to Campbell University and Virginia Tech.

After beating Akron 3-1 in the first day of action, the Phoenix went on to beat NC A&T 11-0. The Phoenix piled up 15 hits and got a five inning, complete game performance from pitcher Whitney Meeks. Meeks gave up only one hit in the game which was called after five innings because

of the mercy rule.

"We had solid defense," Elon coach Patti Raduenz said. "Whitney [Meeks] pitched a great game. We were just aggressive hitters. If they brought it in the zone we jumped on it."

The Phoenix dropped its first game of the round-robin tournament to Campbell. The Phoenix tried to close the gap in the bottom of the seventh, loading the bases with one out, but two straight outs ended the Elon rally.

"We made a run for it toward the end game," Raduenz said. "I want to see our team, as far as being successful in the future, making a run in every inning. I just want to see us make that adjustment a little bit sooner."

Raduenz said she thought the team was thrown by the difference in the NC A&T and Campbell pitchers.

"When she brought some pitches in the zone, she's not that fast so we were just a little ahead of the game," Raduenz said. "Rather than keeping our hands back and waiting a little bit longer, we were jumping early and not getting as solid contact as I

would've liked to have seen."

A bright spot for the Phoenix in the game against Campbell was the pitching of senior Jennifer Lamb. Lamb pitched four scoreless innings, giving up two hits. She also recorded the win in the team's game against Akron.

"She's going to be one of our starters," Raduenz said. "She's in the rotation. We've got such a well-balanced staff that whoever's not starting could possibly come in to be a reliever for us. We really don't have any pitchers that are strictly closers or

relievers."

Raduenz also said stamina isn't a concern for her pitchers. "Our pitchers could go 14 innings," she said. "They could go two games. They could pitch the first game and come back and relieve again. That's probably something we can do that's a little different than baseball. They go seven to nine innings and they're done for the next three or four days."

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Bridgette Guedri / Photographer

The Phoenix softball team prepares for its game against Robert Morris College. The Phoenix won the game 7-3.

Elon Results				
2/20	Elon	3	Akron	1
2/21	Elon	11	NC A&T	0
2/21	Elon	0	Campbell	2
2/22	Elon	7	Robert Morris	3
2/22	Elon	0	Virginia Tech	7
Elon Invitational Final Standings				
	Virginia Tech			5-0
	Akron			3-2
	Campbell			3-2
	Elon			3-2
	North Carolina A&T			0-5