Tech stumbles early in ACC tourney

By Alex Mitchell
Senior Staff Writer

The Tech baseball team traveled to Durham, N.C. on May 25 for the ACC Tournament. Tech’s 9-17 record earned them the No. 3 seed entering the tournament, but the Jackets failed to make it past pool play, losing two out of their three games.

Tech was top seeded against Clemson to open the tournament. The Tigers were one of two ACC teams Tech lost a series to this season.

Similar to the match-up earlier in the season, Clemson defeated Tech thanks to Dominick Leon, the Tigers’ starting pitcher. Leon pitched eight innings and only gave up two walks in Clemson’s first win of the season against the Jackets on April 29, and he was good again last Wednesday, pitching five shutout innings en route to a 9-0 Clemson win.

The Jackets were able to load the bases in the first inning and freshman second baseman Mott Hyde added a double in the second inning, but Leon was able to slip out of the jams by inducing multiple fly balls.

The game remained a scoreless pitcher’s duel until the fourth inning, with a pair of singles, Clemson right fielder Chris Epps launched a 2-1 pitch over right field for a three-run homer.

Tech looked poised to cut into Clemson’s lead in the fifth inning when freshman center fielder Kyle Wren led off the inning with a triple, but two more strikeouts by Leone left the Jackets scoreless again.

When junior starting pitcher Nick Fitts left the game in the seventh inning, Tech was only down four runs, but the Jackets’ bullpen more than doubled the deficit by giving up five runs in the ninth inning.

Thursday proved to be a long day for the Jackets, but it also turned out to be a good one. After 15 innings, Tech finished off N.C. State 6-5 after Hyde stole home plate to score the go-ahead run.

Tech trailed the Wolfpack 5-4 in the eighth inning when freshman catcher Zane Evans hit a single between two defenders that plated sophomore left-fielder Sam Dove.

The score would remain tied at five until the top of the 15th, when Hyde hit a one-out double to start the rally. Dove grounded out, but Hyde showed good awareness to advance to third on the play.

Two pitches later, Hyde broke for home plate and ended up sliding into the bag just before the catcher’s tag.

Former pitcher Matthew Grimes (7-3), who came into the game in the 14th inning, pitched two no-hit innings and got the win.

Tech’s game against Florida State in the following day was postponed due to inclement weather, so it was moved to Saturday morning. Sophomore right fielder Brandon Thomas and Evans combined for four hits and two RBI, but it was not enough as the Seminoles won 4-2 and eliminated the Jackets from the tournament.

Sophomore pitcher Buck Farmer started the game for the Jackets and had eight strikeouts in six innings pitched while allowing three earned runs. However, one three-run inning was enough to hand Farmer his third loss of the season.

Tech’s offense did not record a hit until the fifth inning, and Tech was not able to score until the seventh when Evans singled home two runs.

Ultimately, the Seminoles edged the Jackets and ended Tech’s hopes of earning a national seed in the NCAA Tournament. Still, Tech is hosting an NCAA Regional and will face Austin Peay on Friday in its first game of the NCAA Tournament.

Men’s tennis makes Round of 16 for first time since ‘94

By Steven Cappetta
Staff Writer

After defeating both Middle Tennessee State and Mississippi State in the first and second rounds of the NCAA Tournament, the No. 15 Tech men’s tennis team made its first trip to the NCAA Round of 16 since 1994.

In their Round of 16 matchup on May 21, Tech faced the No. 2 overall seed, the University of Southern California, and dropped the match 4-0 to the two-time defending national champion. Four out of the USC players rank in the top 50 nationally, led by No. 1 Steve Johnson.

Tech went on to win their third consecutive NCAA Tournament. The Jackets play over the next three weekends to secure their third consecutive NCAA Championship.

Junior Kevin King and sophomore Juan Spirt were both defeated in the singles and doubles tournament.

King was selected as the No. 14 overall seed in the NCAA singles championship, and King and Spirt participated as a doubles tandem in the NCAA Doubles Championship. Gomez advanced past the first round where he had a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Washington’s Kyle McMarkrow. In the second round he won a closer 7-6 (7-4), 7-5 march over Oklahoma’s Costin Poval, allowing him to advance to the Round of 16.

Gomez saw his Tech career come to an end in the Round of 16, losing 7-5, 6-4 to No. 3 Rhyme Williams of Tennessee. Gomez ended his sophomore season with ACC Player of the Year honors and held a 34-8 season record in singles as a senior.

Gomez had a career record of 119-38 in his four years at Tech, setting a new singles wins record.

In the doubles bracket, King and Spirt advanced past their first round match after defeating Washington’s McMarkrow and Jesus Nedunchezhian in a tough three set match, 4-6, 7-6 (7-2), 6-1.

King and Spirt then faced the No. 1 overall tandem of Tennessee’s Bo Congkic and John-Patrick Smith. King and Spirt upset the top seed in straight sets, 6-3, 6-4, to advance to the quarterfinals and earn All-American status.

The duo then faced ACC rival Duke’s tandem of Reid Carleton and Henrique Cardoza in the quarterfinals and rallied after losing the first set in a tiebreaker. They overtook the Blue Devils in three sets with a final score of 6-7, 6-4, 6-4.

The run ended in the semifinals where they lost to the No. 4 pair of Texas A&M’s Jeff Damado and Austin Krajicek 6-4, 7-6 (7-5). Damado and Krajicek eventually went on to win the NCAA Doubles Championship.

King and Spirt completed the deepest doubles run by a Jackets’ doubles team in school history.

Overall, the duo posted a 35-11 record on the season, the highest wins total in school history.

Golf takes charge early in NCAA Tournament

By Alex Sohani
Sports Editor

The Tech golf team headed to Stillwater, Okla. to participate in the NCAA Golf Championship at Karsten Creek beginning on Tuesday, May 31. The Jackets earned their 24th berth in the tournament since 1985 after winning the ACC championship and advancing through regional play.

Tech went into the tournament with the No. 4 overall seed and faced No. 5 Florida and No. 6 Augusta State in their first two draws.

The first day of the tournament ended well for the Jackets, with the team taking the overall lead in the tournament with a 5-under-par 283. Junior James White took the individual lead early with a 5-under-par 67 on Tuesday, helping to boost Tech to the top of the team standings.

White started the day off strong by hitting four birdies to close out the final five holes of the front nine. On the back nine, White closed the day out with three more birdies on his career day at Karsten Creek.

Senior Paul Haley and senior Kyle Scott also had career bests, hitting a 1-under-par 71 and an even-par 72, respectively. Haley had three birdies on the day, while Scott finished with a consistent day over all 18 holes.

Senior John-Tyler Griffin posted the final score for the day with a 1-over-par 73 performance to give the Jackets their first place team score.

The Jackets held onto their lead through the second day despite posting a rough 2-over-par 290 team score.

Griffin and Haley each hit an even-par 72, while White and freshman Richard Wrenski each shot 1-over for the day.

Tech extended their lead to 8-under par through the top nine, but struggled through the back nine to cut their lead to only one stroke.

White had a hard time on the second nine, hitting two double bogeys, and Griffin added another double bogey on the final hole.

The Jackets held a one stroke lead over UCLA after two days of play. The Jackets were looking to continue their success through the third day of the tournament, which was played prior to the time of print.