Softball cools down in Florida after hot week in Atlanta

By Matthew Bryan
Sports Editor

Instead of heading to the beach for spring break the Tech softball team (12-10) won six games out of the ten they played in two invitational and a double-header at home and sophomore Tiffany Goodman earned a win in three of her four appearances.

The Jackets grabbed five straight in town between the Georgia State Invitational and their two game contest with Eastern Michigan but returns to Atlanta off their disappointing 1-4 performance in the South Florida hosted Speedline Invitational. The Jackets dropped games to Boston University, South Florida and Penn State before topping Tennessee Tech and losing to No. 5 Stanford.

Tech opened in a pitching duel with Boston U., who’s pitcher, Tiffany Finateri, matched Tech’s Tiffany Goodman for seven shutout innings. A Tech error in the tiebreaker led to the Boston win.

The Jackets then took on host South Florida in another tiebreaker game. This time both teams picked up one in regular play and Tech gave up a RBI single to lose the extra frame.

The Jackets retired for the night and were slated to take on Penn State and Tennessee Tech in Saturday’s play. Penn State grabbed a 5-0 lead over the Jackets and held on to finish the game 7-4. Tech’s only win came over Tennessee Tech, who had the early 2-0 lead in the game but allowed Soraya Reddick to bring it to the 4-2 final on her first Yellow Jacket home run. Goodman picked up the win for the Jackets.

The Jackets final game of the invite was a 9-0 Stanford shutout. The Cardinals forced 8 earned runs and 12 hits from Tech pitcher Erin Voelz.

The Jackets entered the tournament riding a five game winning streak topped by two wins over Eastern Michigan in a mid-week double-header. Pitchers Mimi Utt and Erin Voeltz led the Jackets to 8-0 and 3-2 wins, respectively. Five Yellow Jackets crossed the plate on three Eagle errors and Sara Wissmann stole home to make it 6-0 in the bottom of the second. Tech finished the contest with a Wissmann RBI triple and a Jamie Frost RBI single which invoked the mercy rule to end the game at 8-0 in the bottom of the sixth.

In the second game of the afternoon Tech took an early 2-0 lead off two more Eagle errors which plated Tara Knudsen and Lindsay Wood. Tech allowed two Eagles to...
I thought duct tape was Versace’s spring line—oh well.

Dr. Huxtable: You seem to have a problem letting go, like the time you were eight and refused to give your baseball ticket to the turnstile attendants to see the Tigers play. In this case, I understand. LaBarrie brings energy to the court and is always fun to watch, even if he gets blocked more than anyone I’ve ever seen. To answer your question, I don’t see anyone capable of matching his hair other than sophomore forward Clarence Moore who is applying for a medical redshirt. That will be one of the key points to look forward to for the next season.

The dunk by Jones was an omen of things to come for the Cavs, who lost all three contests with the Jackets during the 2000-01 season. Jones would dominate UVA, scoring 20 points on 9-14 shooting, pulling 12 rebounds off the glass, and blocking 6 shots. He lived up to his All-ACC first-team billing.

"He’s a monster," Gillen said. Jones got help from his usual source, junior point guard Tony Akins, who had 16 points and 6 assists. Senior reserve Darryl LaBarrie added 13 for the Jackets on 5-10 shooting.

"We’re not thinking about the NCAA (tournament) right now," said LaBarrie. "We want to take it out of their hands. If we win two more games, we’ll get the automatic bid and we won’t even have to worry about the selection committee."

They didn’t win two more games, but Tech still got the bid. They can thank their play against Virginia for that. Tech forced three Virginia players to foul out, Adam Hall, Chris Williams, and Travis Watson. It has become a common occurrence for Watson, the Cavs center, who fouled out every time this year against Jones and the Jackets.

Point guard Donald Hand led Virginia with 17 points and 6 assists, while Williams added 15 in the losing effort.
It’s spanktarific. Or is that craptastic? Craptacular?
cross the plate off a two-run outfield error but secured the 3-2 win with Jennifer Biggers RBI single. Erin Voeltz took the win for the Jackets and allowed only two unearned runs and struck out seven batters in her complete game.
Tech’s began their March schedule with a 12-2 win over Campbell at the Georgia State Invitational. The Jackets struck first off a Tasha Waugh three-run home run, her first of the season. In her second plate appearance Waugh sent another one over the wall to finish the game 2-for-2 with five RBIs. Goodman picked up the win for the Jackets.
Tech’s second appearance at the Invitational was in their 12-2 win over Campbell at the Georgia State Invitational. The Jackets struck first off a Tasha Waugh three-run home run, her first of the season. In her second plate appearance Waugh sent another one over the wall to finish the game 2-for-2 with five RBIs. Goodman picked up the win for the Jackets.
Tech’s claim as the number one ranked baseball team in the country ended this week after losing 2-3 from NC State and a shutout loss against Auburn.
Tech (14-5, 1-2 ACC), now ranked as high as fourth in the Baseball America Poll and as low as seventh in the Collegiate Baseball Poll, suffered their first shutout loss since a 6-0 defeat at Florida State on April 22, 2000.
The Jackets, who hammered a weak Georgia State team 11-3 on Tuesday, have gone only 3-4 in their past seven games. Tech has experienced an array of problems in the slump, including poor starting pitching, a bullpen that can’t hold a game, and a record-setting offense that hasn’t performed up to its billing.
In their 16-8 loss to the Wolfpack (9-8, 2-1 ACC) on Sunday, the Wildcats jumped off to a quick 9-0 lead on starter Kevin Cameron (2-1) who gave up 7 runs on 6 hits in 1.2 innings of work.
NC State’s Brian Wright had a career day against the Jackets going 6-6 with a pair of homeruns and seven RBI to lead the Wolfpack to their first series win in school history at Atlanta.
Tech left 12 men on base in the loss, with Bryan Prince’s 4-4, 2 RBI performance and Jon Henry Kail’s 4-5, 3 RBI performance the lone offensive highlights.
Friday against NC State, the bullpen couldn’t keep Tech in the game and the offense couldn’t get a key hit. Andy Mitchel (1-1) allowed a Justin Riley RBI double in the eighth to break a 7-7 tie, and a Tech rally in the bottom of the inning couldn’t score any runs. With men on second and third and one out, shortstop Victor Menocal grounded to third and NC State’s Sean Walsh nailing Brian Jackson at the plate. A groundout from All-America candidate Richard Lewis ended Tech’s chance to tie the game.
The slump started last Tuesday night at seventh-ranked Auburn (15-1). Auburn reliever Levale Speigner (4-0) pitched 4.2 scoreless innings allowing 3 hits and striking out six to pick up the win.
Tech’s Phillip Perry pitched seven strong innings, allowing three runs and striking out five.
Tech could not capitalize on a bases-loaded, no outs situation in the top of the third. Menocal popped up to short right field, and Lewis fell victim to a Speigner-led double play.
In the game, Auburn strandedSee Baseball, page 32
I can't believe it—are my Jackets really in the NCAA? I think I'm going to need to seek some professional help

By Derek Haynes
Assistant Sports Editor

Last week I made my weekly visit to my psychiatrist. My life has turned upside down. I used to think I breathed air, that I ate real food. Now I think there must be something going on that humans just aren't aware of.

[Begin taped conversation with my psychiatrist]

Derek: How can the Jackets be in the NCAA Basketball Tournament? This is a team that according to many observers has only two ACC caliber players—center Alvin Jones and Tony Akins. Athletic Director Dave Braine said in a recent article by Jack Williams that he only expected two wins in the conference this season.

Dr. Clifford Huxtable: Yes Derek, I understand your confusion. Remember how I told you last year that as you get more experience with girls, they won’t leave you for the bathroom and never come back?

Derek: Yes. But that hasn’t been completely true.

Dr. Huxtable: Yes Derek, remember Tech has also lost a few games this year. But having five seniors on a team, all of whom see significant playing time, and an experienced point guard in Tony Akins gave Tech an edge in a game where many of the top players leave after their sophomore or junior seasons. Basketball games are won in the final 3 minutes, and Tech only lost close games this season—to Georgia and North Carolina. That’s where experience comes in.

Derek: Yeah, I know, experience helps. But the team doesn’t have a whole lot of talent.

Dr. Huxtable: Derek, they have the best center in the ACC in Jones, and Akins is the only point guard in the league comparable to Jason Williams of Duke. But yes, the talent level is not that high. Jones, Akins, and senior Shaun Fein would be the only players who could have started for any other team in the semi-finals.

Derek: So you agree with me. Then what piece of the puzzle am I missing?

Dr. Huxtable: Good, Derek. You are getting much better at analyzing your self. The pieces that you are missing are conditioning and ACC Coach of the Year Paul Hewitt. In the first days on the Tech campus, Hewitt said Tech would be the best-conditioned team in the ACC. Knowing you can compete physically at the end of the game is extremely important.

Paul Hewitt, boy what can I say about him. I am very proud of him. He never says the wrong things and never takes any credit. I’d bet my dog Sideways that Braine will give Hewitt a hefty raise shortly after the NCAA Tournament.

Derek: About Hewitt. What’s the difference between him and his predecessor Bobby Cremins?

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Derek: Where will seniors Jones, Fein, Jon Babul, Darryl Labarrie, and T.J. Vines be next year?

Dr. Huxtable: Jones, who was often late for practices and wasn’t very disciplined under Cremins, has been helped the most by Hewitt. He is the second player in Tech history to have 1000 points and rebounds and was named All-ACC first team this season. He’s a lock for the NBA Draft, possibly in the first round. The rest will try to play basketball after school, but they’ll be in Europe. None of the others

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SPORTS COMMENTARY

"Now I smell like whoopie cushion" -matty b
Tech takes Virginia thrice, falls to UNC in ACC semifinals

By Derek Haynes
Assistant Sports Editor

UNC 70 - Georgia Tech 63

Tech’s string of close-game wins came to an end Saturday against North Carolina in the ACC Tournament semifinals, but their solid play against UNC and Virginia propelled them into the NCAA Tournament.

Tech trailed the Tarheels by only a point with 48 seconds remaining in the game, but All-American guard Joseph Forte iced the game for UNC.

After a UNC timeout, Forte drove the lane on Tech’s T.J. Vines and it looked like he lost his balance. However, a foul was called on Vines and Forte hit both free throws to give the Heels a 66-63 lead.

In the locker room after the game, Forte called his move “savvy.” On the court after the game, Tech coach Paul Hewitt chased down the officials.

The controversy did not end there. On Tech’s next possession, point guard Tony Akins made an inadvertent pass that fell out of bounds. On Carolina’s inbound play, Brian Morrison found a wide open Juli Peppers who dunked the ball to give UNC a 68-63 lead. Replays showed Peppers, who plays on the Heels football team, took several steps before the dunk.

Forte would put the dagger in Tech’s heart seconds later on a fast break dunk, his 26th and 27th points of the game.

“It was an up-and-down game, a fast-tempo game,” said Forte. “I think that’s the way I play better. I had a better second half as the game got closer. I think everybody focused and stepped up so that we could win,” said Forte.

Tech was also victimized by a 10:47 scoring drought from the field at the end of the first half and into the second half.

“Shots falling is something I don’t worry about as long as we keep taking good shots,” said Tech coach Paul Hewitt. “You can’t get caught up in whether they’re falling or not. As long as you’re doing the right things in terms of basketball, you can’t worry.”

Tech was led by Shaun Fein’s 18 points, but the senior shot only 6-17 from the field. He nailed all three of his three-pointers in the final 9:09. Akins scored 17 on 5-10 shooting from beyond the arc, but the key players in the game weren’t the high scorers but center Alvin Jones.

After scoring 20 points and grabbing 12 rebounds against Virginia in an upset win Friday, the senior was held to 7 points, 6 below his average. The All-ACC first teamer did have 16 rebounds and 3 blocked shots.

“He gave us a little bit of problems in the first (half), but we decided to play behind him and really try to make him score over me and we were waiting for him to make a couple of baskets,” said UNC’s Brandan Haywood. “That never happened so we stayed behind him and I think my height really bothered him.”

Haywood, who many thought was also deserving of an ACC first-team selection, scored 13 points and contributed 4 rebounds.

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Georgia Tech 74 - Virginia 69

As the horn sounded, Alvin Jones walked to mid-court with his arms extended toward the Georgia Dome roof. Jones did not look like a basketball player; he looked more like a churchgoer waiting for a gift from the heavens. He got just that.

Don’t you want me, baby? Don’t you want me, ohohohoh?
Late rally not enough to top St. Joe’s

The Yellow Jackets explosive 38-25 second half attack wasn’t enough to break St. Joseph’s big 17 point halftime lead in Thursday’s first round game of the NCAA Tournament.

By Derek Haynes
Assistant Sports Editor

If Alvin Jones does not attempt a field goal in the first half, something must be wrong. Eighth-Seeded Georgia Tech (17-13) lost to ninth-seeded St. Joseph’s (26-6) 66-62 in the first round of the NCAA Basketball Tournament in San Diego, California.

Jones, named to the All-ACC first team last week, was unable to provide the offensive force needed to counter St. Joe’s powerful guard attack. The Hawk’s Marvin O’Conner paced St. Joe’s attack with 21 points, while freshman point guard Jameer Nelson added 13 points, 6 assists, and 6 rebounds.

Jones, who finished with 8 points and 13 rebounds, missed much of the second half after picking up four fouls. He didn’t score his first bucket until the 14:40 mark of the second half on a follow-up dunk. Senior Darryl LaBarrie led Tech with 15 points on 5-shooting from the floor. Junior point guard Tony Akins added 14 for the Jackets, but shot only 3-11 from the floor, including 1-4 from three-point range.

After the heated first half, Tech was within 3 with 1:09 to play in the game after 2 Akins free throws. However, Akins missed a driving lay-up with 46 seconds to play, and Jones missed an alley-oop dunk after a great feed from LaBarrie with 26 seconds left.

Tech outscored the Hawks 38-25 in the second half, but couldn’t get a key basket when they needed it. The Jackets made several bad passes in the game and committed 17 turnovers in their first tournament appearance since 1996.

Tech shot only 3-18 (16%) from three-point range, more that twice below their average. For the game, the Jackets shot just 37% from the field.

St. Joe jumped out to a 41-24 lead in the first half, thanks largely to a 15-0 run in the middle of the first stanza. Tech went on a run of their own, cutting the lead to 28-20 with 3:48 to go in the first half, but another Hawks run left the Jackets down 17 at the break.

The loss was Tech’s second down-to-the-wire loss in a row after a 70-63 loss to Georgia. Tech’s second half scoring attack was led by Marvin O’Conner who had 13 of his 21 points including three three-pointers.

St. Joseph’s, located in Philadelphia and the second smallest school in the tournament, will face the winner of the Stanford/UNC Greensboro game Saturday. The loss marks the end of Tech’s regular basketball season.