

## June 20 - 21 Goldsboro Tournament Wrap

### 12u Carolina Elite Tigers (0 - 4)

The 12u Carolina Elite Tigers finished 0 - 4 this past weekend in Goldsboro, losing all 4 games by a combined 7 runs (including 3 one-run losses). The Tigers simply did not make enough plays to win close ballgames, both defensively, and at the plate. Part of that can be attributed to the fact that the Tigers were without 3 of their regular players, including 2 of their frontline pitchers. However, the reality is most Carolina Elite teams are traveling each weekend without their full rosters, due to schedule conflicts with their other teams, or scheduled family vacations. Consequently, all Carolina Elite teams need to be prepared to find ways to win ballgames without having their full allotment of players, otherwise this theme/excuse will be repeated every weekend.

Most disappointing was the lack of hitting in RBI situations. The Tigers left a number of runners on base throughout the weekend. I thought as a team the Tigers had a lot of good at-bats, and did a good job of getting runners on base, and creating scoring opportunities. However, the Tigers struggled to produce in those RBI situations (I can remember at least a half dozen innings where we failed to score with a runner on 3rd and less than 2 outs). The three things you can't do in those situations we did repeatedly (strike out, pop-out, and weakly ground out - although it was mostly strike-outs and shallow pops that did us in).

In addition, the Tigers failed to make some very routine defensive plays which could have both ended innings, as well as reduced the pitch count. Cole Woolard was the best available arm we had this past weekend in terms of arm strength, and experience, but he was limited to only 3.2 innings of work because of some spotty defense Saturday, which caused him to throw 58 pitches in only 3 innings.

Internal competition is a great separator of players. When you have competition within your own roster for playing time, players will either rise to the challenge, or back down from it (and those who back down from **internal** competition, will also back down from **external** competition - meaning the competition from their opponent). This is why when a coach is faced with the "problem" of having too many good players/pitchers to find innings for, they will always respond with "this is a GREAT problem to have." They know that eventually, the players that actually want that competitive setting will respond and play well, ultimately winning the job. The players that don't want to compete for the job will back down (and those are the players that you don't want on the field in pressure situations anyway). It's exactly like Pete Carroll's philosophy as the head coach of USC's football program. They go out and recruit the best players at all positions. If they have 4 running backs on the depth chart, they'll go out and recruit another blue chip running back. If that running back is "turned off" by the fact that they already have 4 all-american running backs on their roster, then that is the type of mindset they don't want on their team anyway. They want the kid that is going to say "so what, I trust my ability and work ethic, and I want the chance to beat them out." That's the type of attitude that infects a program, or team, and that's the type of attitude that wins year in, and year out (as USC has proven since Carroll took over).

Unfortunately, that type of competition can't be created out of thin air. It has to be created by a full roster of quality players. With only 10 guys there this past weekend, it simply wasn't there. Now there are certain players that will play at an aggressive level all the time, because they are simply guys who show up ready to beat their opponent every hour of every day. Those guys are rare, however, and most players need to be stuck with a cattle prod before you can a "desperate" effort out of them. I believe this will happen in Cooperstown, because we will have (at this point) 13 players making that trip. When you do the math, that means a couple guys who have normally been playing when we have been traveling with 10 - 11 guys, are now going to be fighting to get on the field. That's not a bad thing (unless you are a wimp and simply want your playing time "gifted" to you). That is a great challenge to those players who thrive on competition, and I am very much looking forward to watching the players on this team separate themselves by their reaction to it (there will be some players that embrace it, and there will probably be those players that simply go to the corner of the dugout and pout about it - again not the guys you want on the field in a pressure situation).

If you remember one thing from this wrap, remember the 2nd sentence in the 4th paragraph. ***Those players who back down from internal competition, will back down from external competition.*** Bring on Cooperstown.