

Spikes get 3 hits in loss

By Jake Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The State College Spikes' bats haven't been clicking the last two games.

One day removed from scoring just one run, the Spikes fared even worse Monday night.

State College mustered only three hits on their way to their second straight defeat at the hands of the Tri-City ValleyCats, a 7-0 loss at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park.

State College first baseman Matt Curry tallied the first two hits, while center fielder Mel Rojas Jr. notched a single in the ninth.

The three-hit and no run performance capped off a 3-3 homestand in which the Spikes (25-26) produced only ten combined runs.

State College scored just one run over the last two days, both of which ended in losses to the Valleycats (23-27).

Curry singled in the second inning and double in the fourth were the only two hits in the first eight innings Monday night. The first baseman said the Spikes, including himself, have been pressing at the plate the past few couple of nights. Curry has struggled himself recently, going 0-for-4 Sunday.

"We've just got to settle down, get back in our comfort zone," Curry said. "I think we're out of it a bit. Just get back to what we do best, hit the ball the other way, and we'll be fine."

Catcher Matt Skirving had a hard time pinpointing what the exact problem was. Personally, he said he just hasn't been able to get



Matt Curry (54) slides into second base earlier this season. Curry had 2 hits in the Spikes' loss Monday.

Steph Witt/Collegian

comfortable at the plate recently. He has gone 0-for-3 in each of his last two starts at catcher.

The ValleyCats offense got off to a quick start Monday night, tallying runs in two of the three first innings off Spikes starter Tyler Waldron. Waldron, whose record dropped to 2-5 with the loss, allowed three hits and three earned runs in his four innings of work.

Kike Hernandez hit a solo home run over the wall in center field off State College reliever Brooks Pounders to make it 4-0 after five innings.

Tri-City notched a run in the seventh of Sandobal Septimo and two

more in the ninth off Jason Townsend before the game finally came to an end.

Skirving said the tough hitting stretch is also hard on the pitchers. "There was a stretch there where we were scoring runs and helping our pitchers out," Skirving said. "Now our pitchers are working their butts off and we can't do anything to help them out. And that's a frustrating time because then the pitcher can tend to feel like they have to be perfect and when you think that it makes tough to pitch."

Tri-City threw out four different pitchers that stifled the Spikes' bats Monday night. Andrew

Robinson, who started the game, got his first win of the season. He went five innings and gave up just the two hits to Curry, while striking out six.

The Spikes embark on a six-game road trip, which starts at 7:05 tonight against the Lowell Spinners. State College hopes a change of scenery will be good for the team.

"Losing's not fun," said right fielder Adalberto Santos, who went 0-for-3. "Granted it's only two, but you want to keep on winning because we want to put ourselves in the best position."

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MLB

Philadelphia vs. Los Angeles
7:05 p.m., CSN

Pittsburgh at San Diego
10:05 p.m., FSN

International Soccer
United States vs. Brazil
8 p.m., ESPN2

Nets, Raptors will meet in England

The NBA is taking regular-season games to Europe for the first time.

NBA commissioner David Stern announced Monday that the Toronto Raptors and New Jersey Nets will play a pair of regular-season games in London this season.

The teams will face each other March 4 and 5 at the O2 Arena, the same venue that has hosted preseason games over the last several years.

Stern said on a conference call he wasn't yet sure if the regular-season games would be an annual occurrence for the league.

Tigers owner interested in Pistons

Mike Ilitch, the owner of the Detroit Tigers and Detroit Red Wings, said Monday that he wants to buy the NBA's Detroit Pistons in part to make sure the team doesn't leave town.

Ilitch said he has notified the Pistons of his interest. He said he fears the Detroit area could lose the Pistons if an out-of-town buyer comes forward.

No Americans in Top 10 for first time

American player is in the top 10 for the first time since the men's tennis computer rankings began in 1973.

Andy Roddick dropped from No. 9 to No. 11 in the ATP rankings issued Monday.



Roddick

Roddick lost in the third round last week at the Legg Mason Tennis Classic in Washington.

U.S. men have gone 27 consecutive Grand Slam tournaments without a title. Roddick was the last American to win a major title at the 2003 U.S. Open.

Brazil game comes at right time

Clearly, the United States is intent of keeping up interest in soccer.

The World Cup isn't even a month over and the U.S. is already lined up to play the world's No. 1, Brazil. Building off the run the Americans made in South Africa will be vital, and what better way than to play a very recognizable team.

While this won't be the best side Brazil has ever fielded, it's still Brazil and it will still be a fight.

The United States won't be playing all of its top players, but rest assured casual fan, Landon Donovan and Tim Howard will be there.

With club season about to begin it says a lot about these players to suit up for country.

So you should most certainly be watching.

Q: Who is the all-time leading scorer for the United States men's soccer team?

Sunday's answer: Oklahoma was ranked No. 1 in the final release of the first coaches' poll.



Walker Gourley (left) makes a play earlier this season. Gourley struck out three times Monday. As a team, the Spikes struck out nine times.

Steph Witt/Collegian

Spikes look to right ship on road

By Zach Fleagle
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After a 500 home stand, the State College Spikes are heading out on a six-game road trip, looking to turn around their recent struggles at the plate.

The Spikes finished their last home game with a 7-0 loss Monday night against the Tri-City Valley Cats, the short-season Class A affiliate of the Houston Astros. State College struggled putting runs on the board throughout the home stretch, scoring only ten in six games.

As far as the players are concerned, the six games away from home followed by a two-day All-Star break might be beneficial to the teams' psyche.

"Things are not clicking right now," right fielder Adalberto Santos said. "Just got to take it in and keep going hard. We need to get away have a day to ourselves and reflect, get ready for tomorrow mentally."

Santos isn't alone in the idea that a bus seat might be more relaxing than his own bed in State College. Catcher Matt Skirving agreed that the team needs to sit back and just try and find each players own game, especially offensively.

Skirving said that hitting is truly

frustrating but the run support has to increase to take the pressure off of the pitching staff.

"Everybody knows their swing the best and it's just a matter of everybody getting back into that comfort zone and getting back into what they do best," Skirving said.

Skirving, as well as first baseman Matt Curry, agrees with Santos that it will be good to get away. Curry said that the main struggle is obviously just the inability to hit and partially because everyone is a little too anxious to get out of their slump.

"We have a long bus ride to give us some time to think about what we've been doing wrong," Curry said. "We're just in a rut right now."

Despite the lack of production, highlighted with the shutout Monday night, it's not all negative for the Spikes. The team is headed to Lowell for its first three games of a six-game trip to face a Spinners team that is currently last in the league. The players aren't focused on records as much as just going into the All-Star break with momentum.

"Hopefully we can win a bunch of games in the next week and carry some momentum into the off days," Skirving said.

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Cushing: overtraining led to positive test

By Chris Duncan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON -- Suspended Houston Texans linebacker Brian Cushing said Monday that his positive test for a fertility drug last year was the result of overtrained athlete syndrome, a "unique" condition he contends can trigger hormonal spikes.

Texans owner Bob McNair was in New York on Monday and was expected to cite the syndrome in urging NFL commissioner Roger Goodell to reduce or rescind the four-game suspension. The league denied Cushing's appeal of the suspension in February.

Cushing was suspended for the first four games this season after testing positive last September for HCG, a drug on the league's banned substance list.

Cushing says he never took the drug, which can be used to restart testosterone production after a steroid cycle, and has no idea how it got into his body.

Cushing disclosed details of the syndrome after Monday morning's practice.

"I think that's the final diagnosis we came up with," he said, "and a lot of doctors have supported why this has happened."

Cushing said months of tests show that he had a "unique" medical condition that led to the positive test.

"Every individual is genetically different," he said. "I had a unique situation where something like this occurred and we have the science to back it up. It's taken months. It's really beyond what we ever thought and it's beyond the regular medical doctor."

"We've gone in depth, and there has been a lot of money spent on the research," he said.

"There have been a lot of interesting results that I think can help us."

McNair repeatedly has said he believes Cushing, while also saying he supports the NFL's drug testing programs.



Brian Cushing adjusts his chinstrap at training camp on Aug. 1

David J. Phillip/AP