

SPORTS

Softball team off to winning start

By **TONY JENKINS**
Sports Writer

The Vol State softball team is riding a hot streak heading into their first road trip of the season.

They are 12-1 and putting up some impressive numbers so far.

They opened up conference play by defeating Hiwassee in a double header on Saturday at home.

They will then play four straight series on the road beginning with Wallace State Community College.

They will then play three conference sets against Jackson State Community College, Walters State Community College, and Roane State Community College.

It is their longest road streak of the year.

Through 11 games played, the Lady Pioneers were averaging 11.6 runs per game and only allowing 3.3 runs.

Morgan Winchester leads the offensive attack so far with 3 home runs and a .649 batting average. Her sister, Megan Winchester, also has chipped in 2 home runs of her own.

"Our hitting has been really good so far," said Morgan. "But it's easy when you don't have to score many runs to



Chris Crankshaw / Staff Photo

Infielder Tiffany Mattingly takes a swing in Saturday's game against the Hiwassee College Tigers.

win."

The pitching has done its part in this run. Abby Mabry leads the team in wins with 4, while Casey Teal has 3 of

her own.

Amanda Duke, Meagan Daniel, and Anna Forshee each have 1 win each. Morgan Winchester said she knows

how important conference games are.

"We have been playing well, but conference is when we have to step up," she said.

SPORTS OPINION

MLB's DirecTV deal is not good for fans

By **ROB SPIRES**
Sports Editor

By mid-March, I'm usually counting down the days until the Major League Baseball season starts the first week of April.

Unfortunately, this year the sport seems tainted.

You see, for the past three seasons I have watched my favorite team, the Philadelphia Phillies, almost every night thanks to MLB's Extra Innings pay-per-view package.

Watching these games year-in and year-out has transformed me from merely a casual fan into someone who looks forward to each night's game.

This year is different.

This year MLB Commissioner Bud Selig has signed an exclusive \$700 million, seven year deal for the Extra

Innings package to appear exclusively on DirecTV.

Apparently Selig and his cohorts feel like they have enough power over fans to actually make them drop their cable or other satellite service in favor of DirecTV.

Well, they don't.

As a matter of fact, I couldn't make the change if I wanted to.

I live in an apartment with no balcony, porch or other suitable mounting place for a dish.

Cable is my only option.

But the truth is, I'm happy with cable anyway.

I can get all the channels I could ever want, as well as high speed Internet access for a very reasonable cost.

I shouldn't have to change that aspect of my life for Selig, or the MLB.

Fortunately, some members of the

Senate agree.

John Kerry, D-Mass., as well as Arlen Specter, R-Pa., have already begun to probe into whether this antitrust deal and a similar one in place for the National Football League, should be able to take place.

In a recent article for sportsillustrated.com, Specter stated, "It may be necessary for the Senate Judiciary Committee to have further hearings on the antitrust implications of the NFL and MLB TV programming and whether it is in the public interest to allow the antitrust exemptions of the NFL and MLB to continue."

For the time being, there is at least one option for die-hard baseball fans not willing to make the switch to DirecTV.

On MLB's own website, a service called MLBTV is offered.

Not unlike Extra Innings, MLBTV allows fans to watch all the games of any team they choose.

These games are broadcast over the Internet and are often choppy and the picture is usually granulated.

There is, however, no middle man such as the cable provider.

This means that the money goes directly from fan's pockets to the MLB's if fans choose this service.

I think I will try this service out, but I am not thrilled about having to watch games this way, especially since I know there is a better product out there.

It seems to me that the MLB should be a little less greedy and a little more eager to recapture fans that they have lost through the 1994 strike and recent steroid scandals.

Unfortunately, it seems like all they care about is the almighty dollar.