Softball team loses 5-0 in 1st round of tournament

By Eric R. Fleming
What began as a bright, beautiful Friday ended in disappointment for the women's softball team, which lost in the first round of the Massachusetts AIAW Class C tournament. The Falcons of Fitchburg State blanked MIT 5-0 en route to winning their first-ever championship.

Defense and hitting, two aspects of the game which have been Heiney's team to the tourney, disappeared at crucial points during the contest. MIT could muster only two hits off the pitching of Fitchburg's Jane Carbonneau, while the defense suffered a fatal lapse in the middle innings, enabling Fitchburg to put the game away. Tech settled down late in the game and away from Carbonneau in the field, but by then the damage had been done. Meanwhile, Fitchburg played the entire game, which made the difference.

The Falcons broke out to a 1-0 lead in top of the second. Marie Smith led off with a soft fly to right that skidded by rightfielder Jeannie Raymond '84 for a triple. Sharon Cox then hit a grounder to first. Big Stacy Thompson '84 checked Smith, but threw errantly to first base, allowing Smith to reach to third. Cox eventually made it to third, but Carbonneau bounced to short to end the rally.

Fitchburg upped its lead to 3-0 in the third after two were out. A triple by Clare Conner and a double by Smith were the key hits in that rally. Both extra-base hits were to right field; although the Fitchburg batters were not able to pull the ball on MIT pitcher Cindy Robinson '84, they still managed to hit the ball hard to the gaps in right.

The fourth inning broke MIT's spirit and clinched the game for the visitors. With one out, Carey Newman led off with a liner right at Raymond. The shot skipped off the rightfielder's glove and rolled all the way to the fence as Newman went to third. Carbonneau then bunted. First baseman Joyce Kelly '84 fielded it cleanly, but her throw went wide of the bag and of Robinson, who was backing up the play. Newman scored easily, and by the time the ball was relayed to the infield, Carbonneau came home with Fitchburg's fifth run.

After that mini-disaster, the Engineers played the kind of ball which put them in the tourney. Robinson became her usual dominating self, retiring the last 11 batters she faced, picking up four strikeouts in the process. The Falcons, however, were more dominating. With a little help from the plate umpire (who called a large and inconsistent strike zone all game long), Carbonneau's pitching (often low and slow) kept MIT off balance. Many MIT batters had to go for 0-2 and 1-2 pitches which were not good but were too close to strike. Three of Carbonneau's four strikeouts were on called third strikes.

MIT's best threats were in the fifth and sixth, when it put two runners on in each inning. Raymond and Grace Sacardo '86 walked to lead off the fifth, but the next three Tech hitters were easy outs. In the sixth, Lou Reindurah '84 and Terri Felix '84 were left standing.

The seventh inning told the story of the game. MIT's Kelly was safe on a grounder that shortstop Newton let roll through her legs. On the next play, however, Newman missed for her mistake by making a diving stop of a grounder off the bat of Christy Bellinger '84 and getting the force on Kelly for the second out. Thompson went down swinging to end the game.

Emmanuel defeated Regis in the semi-final game. Fitchburg won the championship game, beating Emmanuel 5-3.

Fitchburg 5, MIT 0

Fitchburg 5 1 0 0
MIT 0 0 0 0

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Tech photo by Rhoy S. D. Khaleel
Grace Sacardo '86 is a study in concentration as she hits against Fitchburg State last Friday afternoon.

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