

Tootle Hopes to Change Tune of Western Blues

By STURGIS HEDRICK

"BUT THIS happens to us every time."

The speaker was George Tootle and you couldn't help sympathize with the man. It was 5:20 on the afternoon of April 27 and his Western Blues had just lost the wildest game of the Seashore League baseball season, 5-3, in 10 innings to the Salter Path Braves.

WHAT MADE the medicine a more bitter dose for the manager of the Western Blues was the scene of the setback, his own home Bogue diamond. His home fans rank among the most loyal in the county.

Like George himself, those fans know the disappointment of defeat. But they couldn't help recall a similar loss last season to the same team. No true sport expects to win 'em all. But, then again, why do some teams have to lose all the close ones?

ONE READY answer springs forth in explanation: Bench strength or depth.

Take the defending champion and still undefeated Eastern Blues as the best example. The Downeasters saw the specter of defeat last Sunday when they trailed Salter Path, 3-2, in the sixth.

THEN MANAGER Wilson Davis called to his dugout. He summoned Kenny Lewis, Manley Gaskill and moved Dallas Wayne Arthur from first base to the mound. Kenny won the ball game with a towering triple into the left-field

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pin. Manley scored two runs in two at-bats and smacked a double.

And what did Wilson's Peerless Pitcher do? Lefty Arthur fanned five and hurled hitless ball in three innings. That gives him 70 strikeouts in 37 innings, quite a bit better than his 13-per-game whiff pace of last year when he won 10 and lost 0.

BUT LET'S get back to George Tootle's Western Blues. This Sunday opens a brand new page in the score book. They entertain Manager Donnie Aycock's Red Sox in the Blues' Bogue sandlot, just a few miles down Route 24 from the home of the Sox.

Both teams have their pitchers primed. Both are right-hand throwers who can fire that ball: Delbert Sutton for the Blues and Jay Garner for the Sox. The Westerners boast last year's home run king of the league in big Monroe Johnson, center-fielder, and Newport points with pride to Alex (The Big) Fox, first-baseman who leads this year's Seashore circuit with 4 round-trippers in 6 games.

COULD IT be neighborly love lost this Sunday?