

The Dugout Culture that Embodies Elon Club Baseball

By Matt Shiffman

It's a chilly October morning. Elon Club Baseball is losing 5-0 to Wake Forest in the seventh and final inning. The Elon team has had basically nothing to cheer about on this crisp Saturday morning. That means nothing. The players are still as engaged as ever supporting their teammates. Their noise fills the cool air.

At most there is 15 people in attendance for this game. The players aren't putting on a show in the dugout for the fans. They're doing it to support their fellow teammates. The brotherhood is a theme for the club.

"Everyone is engaged all the time." Senior Bennett Simpson simply explained.

The rowdy energy that is standard for Elon Club Baseball is something often seen in little league baseball. It's easy to picture a bunch of nine-year-olds screaming and chanting over the course of a game. As players age and rosters get smaller, that aspect tends to fade. The loud noises from a dugout tend to align more with the timing of loud cheers from the crowd.

Not Elon Club Baseball. And the support helps the players on the field.

"It's awesome to be on the field while 20 guys lose their mind for you." Simpson said.

Fellow senior James Renda explained that one of the differences with of playing club baseball at Elon is the rosters have over 10 more players than in high school. So, when the team is on the field, the dugout is full with 10-15 players supporting their guys from the bench, as opposed to around four reserve players on a typical high school team.

Elon uses that expanded roster to their advantage.

“When the energy in the dugout is live like that, it helps the guys out on the field and the guys who are in the dugout and in the bench aren’t upset that they’re not playing, they’re happy to be there and happy to see the guys on the field do well.” Renda said.

The club is a tightknit group, and few things exemplify that more than the support the dugout gives the players.

“Because the club is more like a family, and has built a culture like that, everyone wants to see everyone play well.” Renda said.

The rowdy dugout has been part of Elon Club Baseball’s culture since its first season, president of the club Case Marino told me.

Specifically, he told me about the never say die attitude that talking from the dugout gives to the players on the field.

“We follow the philosophy that a game is never lost as long as we’re still talking.” Marino said.

Some of the chants and celebrations that the team preforms during the game go all the way back to that aforementioned first season. The spirit from the first club baseball team in 2004 is alive and well in the home dugout at Frankfurt Field.

That chilly October game against Wake Forest ended with three quick outs in the bottom of the seventh inning as Elon suffered a 5-0 loss. Still, the dugout was engaged until the final out. After the game, a Wake Forest player spent little time talking with his parents about the win, or his teammates dominant start on the mound. Instead, he focused on Elon’s dugout.

He raved about the commitment from the Elon dugout to be involved from first pitch to last. For him, it clearly stuck out as unique and exceptional. As for the Elon Club Baseball players, it is simply the standard.