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The Atlantic Coast Rugby League season is in full swing, and we check in with a few programs and take a look at what's happened so far and what's coming up.

On Saturday, Virginia Tech fell 22-18 to Clemson in a heartbreaker. The Hokies have made losing closely to the Tigers a trend the last few seasons.

"This one hurts worse than the other two. We're as good a team as they are, and we've just lost three against them now in the league by less than one score every single game," said Virginia Tech coach Andy Richards. "And we just can't get past this barrier. It was there for the taking Saturday and we just didn't take it."

The Hokies led 18-15 with 90 seconds left, but Clemson stole the victory with a late converted try.

“Fair play to Clemson. [Their coach] Justin Hickey’s a good friend of mine and he’s an extremely good coach, and he just completely changed their style of play,” added Richards. “We closed them down in the first half. They’ve got good backs but we didn’t let them in with a sniff. He changed his tactics at halftime and played a pretty forward orientated game.”

Virginia also played on the weekend, beating North Carolina 30-16 in rainy Chapel Hill, NC. The Cavaliers were paced by tries from No. 8 Zach Addis, scrumhalf Chris Curtin and No. 10 Vasco Pinto. The win was big for Virginia, bringing them back to .500 at 1-1 after a loss to NC State. It also gave the young Virginia forwards another opportunity to get better.

“We are in a rebuilding mode this season for 15s. Our forwards are very young and inexperienced for the most part,” said Virginia coach Ernest Marshall. “Our few seasoned forwards are working hard to get the younger ones to jell, and I think we will be getting better with every match experience. We have always been smaller in size than most of our opponents but make up for it with speed and fitness.”

Up this weekend for the Cavs is a home game against Clemson. The Tigers are joined by Navy and Maryland in the ACRL undefeated club. The Terrapins face Virginia Tech Saturday, and the Midshipmen host Wake Forest.

Maryland is led by flyhalf Matias Cima, named ACRL Player of the Week for his performance in the Terps’ 34-21 defeat of NC State last weekend. He’ll be a person of interest for the Hokies this week.

“We’ve got to continue our defense in the backs. Our backline did extremely well on defense on Saturday, and if we can continue to close them down, it doesn’t matter who they have at the 10,” said Richards of Cima. “He’s not a one-man circus. He can’t do everything on his own.”

The Terps have some other pretty good players, too, in John Davis and No. 8 Keith Sneddon.

Wake Forest, 0-1, is excited about the chance to travel to Annapolis, Md. and take on Navy, even if not much is expected in terms of results.

“Nine years ago when I took over this program I would have laughed if somebody said you guys are going to play Navy,” said Wake Forest coach Pat Kane. “It’s just so far out of our league it would have been like a seventh and eighth grade team playing a professional sports team.

“The fact that we go in there, as heavy underdogs obviously, the guys know they can step foot on the field, and its going to be great to see their facilities and see what a team that isn’t varsity but is basically as close to varsity as they come in setup and recognition by their school. It’s going to be a good measuring stick of how far we’ve come from where we started in 2004 and we were a mid-to-low level DIII team to now going to Annapolis to play a league game against Navy is something that’s pretty exciting and the kids are really excited.”

If the Demon Deacons are going to compete with Navy, they’ll need all-conference locks James Watson and Christian Gutowski to play well.

“They’re going to need to lead from the front and step up and front up against what I expect is going to be an incredibly physical set of Navy forwards,” said Kane.

“And they need to set the tone from the get-go that we’re not going to back down, we’re not going to get beat and blown off the ball in the loose, and if they can set the tone by matching Navy’s physicality, then I think the rest of the team will follow that lead.”