

Softball dominates USA Invitational

Lady Jags fall to Chattanooga, but bounce back to win three straight

By DREW SCELSI Sports Editor

The No. 22 South Alabama softball team improved to 11-3 last week, defeating Nicholls State and winning three of four games in the South Alabama Invitational over the weekend.

No. 22 USA 7, Nicholls St. 2

The Jaguars defeated the Nicholls State Colonels 7-2 on Wednesday in Thibodaux, Louisiana. USA outhit the Nicholls State 5-3 and took advantage of two Colonel errors to secure the victory, which was its seventh in a row.

"I thought this was a great win," said South Alabama head coach Becky Clark. "[Nicholls State] is a great team, and they compete. I thought it was a well-played game, and I didn't think there was a point in the game that we started to press."

Emily Messer had one run, one hit and two RBI, and Kaitlyn Griffith

had one run, one hit and one RBI for the Jaguars.

Devin Brown pitched for 5 innings for USA, before being replaced by Kalen McGill, who earned the victory.

Chattanooga 3, USA 1

The Jags had their seven-game win streak snapped by Chattanooga on Friday, behind a strong performance by Mocs' pitcher Cori Jennings.

The Jaguars fell to Chattanooga 3-1, and had not lost since falling to Eastern Kentucky 1-0 at the Sand Dollar Classic on Feb. 7.

Jennings (2-1) held South Alabama to one run on just seven hits, while striking out five batters.

"[Jennings] had a legitimate offspeed pitch, and we had a hard time adjusting to it," USA head coach Becky Clark said.

South Alabama went up 1-0 in the first on an RBI single by sophomore catcher Chloe Rathburn, but that would be the only time the Jaguars could score.

Devin Brown (4-2) allowed just three hits and struck out nine batters, but gave up three runs and a seasonhigh five walks in 5 1/3 innings.

USA 14, Ball State 6

Two home-runs by Kaitlyn Griffith allowed the South Alabama softball team to beat the Ball State Cardinals on Saturday. Griffith's two homers and six RBI tied two game records during the 14-6 win.

"Last night we came out and lost to UTC, and it was a great game but they were the better team," said Griffith. "Today we said we would come out and play our game and that's what we did."

Blair Johnson had three runs and one RBI, and Amanda Herron finished with two hits and four RBI.

"The sign of a good team is one that responds after things don't go the way you want the day before, and our kids came out today and had strong bats," said South Alabama head coach Becky Clark.

USA 8, Sam Houston St. 0

On Saturday, South Alabama beat Sam Houston State via the mercy rule, shutting out the Bearkats 8-0 in five innings.

Freshman Devin Brown (5-2) struck out 15 of the 20 batters she faced and allowed just two hits over five innings.

Stephanie Pilkington kicked off the scoring frenzy for South Alabama in the first on a two-RBI double to right center field. Blair Johnson also doubled to score Pilkington. In the second, Amanda Minahan knocked Kristian Foster on a single to left field and Emily Messer scored on Pilkington's second hit of the day. Minahan would later score on a sacrifice fly by Chloe Rathburn.

The Jaguars finished off the scoring in the fourth on an RBI groundout by Taylor Bahos and a sacrifice fly by Kaitlyn Griffith. Pilkington finished the day 2-for-2 with three RBI and two runs scored. Minahan also went 2-for-2 at the dish with two runs scored and an RBI.

USA 5, Jacksonville 4

Freshman Haleigh Lowe connected on a walk-off single in extra innings Sunday to power the South Alabama Jaguars softball team to a 5-4 victory over Jacksonville University.

The Dolphins (7-9) tied the game in the top of the seventh inning on a two-out RBI double by Kristen Griffith, and two innings later, Lowe would deliver her late-game heroics.

South Alabama (11-3) bounced back from Friday's loss to Chattanooga by winning three straight games in the South Alabama Invitational

Stephanie Pilkington was 2-for-3 for the Jaguars with an RBI and two runs scored.

SPORTS REPORTER AARON POIROUX CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE

Baseball topples Tigers, drops three straight

By DREW SCELSI **Sports Editor**

The South Alabama baseball team started the week off strong with a victory over Auburn on Tuesday, but lost its next three games in the South Alabama Invitational.

USA 7, Auburn 4

On Tuesday, the Jaguars scored six unanswered runs, including three in the sixth, to rally and beat Auburn 7-4 at Stanky Field.

Austin Bembnowski (1-0) pitched eight scoreless innings in relief to earn the win, retiring 13 of the first 14 Tigers he faced.

"We were down early and we needed to get something going," Bembnowski said. "I was able to just come in and do my job. It was a little cold tonight. I really didn't have my off-speed stuff, so I stuck with my fastball most of the time and I was able to pound it for strikes."

Bembnowski allowed just three hits and two walks, while striking out six.

The Jaguars fell behind early, surrendering three runs in the top of the first inning after a two-run double by Auburn's Bo Decker, who then scored on Cody Nulph's RBI single.

South Alabama scored its first run of the game in the bottom of the first on an RBI sacrifice fly from freshman catcher Jared Barnes, but Auburn answered in the second,

scoring on a wild pitch by Bembnowski.

Auburn held the Jags scoreless in the second and third innings, but USA would score six runs in the next three: two runs in the fourth on Adam Ballew's two-RBI single, one in the fifth on an RBI single by Barnes. and three in the sixth started by Bud Collura's RBI single to center field. Garrett DeGallier added an RBI sac fly and Barnes and those are the kind of kids you need to drew a bases-loaded walk to finish off the

Barnes finished the game 2-for-3 at the plate with one run and three RBI. Ballew was also 2-for-3 with two RBI and one run

"It was tough falling behind early like that " USA head coach Mark Calvi said. "But our guys kept fighting and we put some good at-bats together. They kept playing hard and we got back into it. We had one strikeout tonight, which was outstanding. We made them (Auburn) work for everything, and made them field every ball.

was tagged with the loss after giving up six for us. runs on eight hits in 5 1/3 innings.

No. 13 Maryland 8, USA 0

The lags lost their first game of the season to the No. 13 Maryland Terrapins on Friday, Maryland right-hander Mike Shawaryn allowed only three hits and struck out six Jags during the 8-0 shutout.

said South Alabama head coach Mark Calvi. "He was as good as advertised. He locates his fastball at 90-92 with some late sink. There's a reason why he did as well as he did in the ACC. We knew he was going to be tough to deal with; he blanked South Carolina in a regional last year. He has good stuff,

"I thought Shawaryn was very good,"

fense than us tonight." For the Jaguars, Cole Billingsley had 2 hits, while Cole Gleason and Ben Gann both finished with a single hit apiece.

beat. He pitched really well, and on a cold

night they pitched, hit and played better de-

"It's good to play the best competition you can and see what your guys have," said Calvi. "Good competition shows you where you have strengths and weaknesses. I have learned a lot of good things about this team the last couple of games. There are a lot of things I like, and there are a few things I don't like but playing a tough schedule will Auburn starter Keegan Thompson (1-1) do that. The tougher the schedule, the better

> "At the end of the year if we want to play for championships in the postseason, these are the types of teams we'll face and the type of teams we will have to beat to advance. Hopefully I will see a response tomorrow. We play as good a team, or better, in Arkansas Saturday. The bottom line is we need a better start to the game."

No. 15 Arkansas 7, USA 0

The No. 15 Arkansas Razorbacks blanked South Alabama 7-0 at Stanky Field Saturday. allowing just five hits over nine innings.

The Razorbacks (4-1) used four pitchers in the shut out, with right-hander Jackson Lowery (1-0) getting the win after allowing only one hit over three innings of relief.

Ryne Long (0-1) took the loss for the Jaguars after giving up eight hits and three runs over 4.2/3 innings pitched.

"We got five hits tonight and hit another seven on the nose," South Alabama head coach Mark Calvi said. "We walked nine times, and we had our leadoff man on six or seven times out of nine. We had our opportunities. Our guys were swinging the bats. Our pitchers have done a nice job as far as not issuing walks. We gave up a few too many hits, but we just need to play cleanly. [I] told our guys that we need to keep playing hard. If they continue to work and learn from some failures, it will pay dividends later."

Third baseman Ben Gann was the only South Alabama player to record multiple hits, going 2-for-2.

Arkansas broke the game open in the fourth inning, with Rick Nomura ripping an RBI double into right field. Brett McAfee

See Baseball falls to 4-3

Lady Jags fall to Georgia St., top Georgia Southern

By AARON POIROUX Sports Reporter

The South Alabama women's basketball team split its games last week, falling to Georgia State on Thursday, but battling back to take down Georgia Southern on Saturday.

The Jaguars lost their sixth straight game to Georgia State 69-54 on Thursday. The Jags had cut the lead to just six points with three minutes remaining, before a 9-0 run by the Fagles sealed the game

"We just didn't take advantage of our opportunities tonight," said South Alabama head coach Terry Fowler. "I thought early in the game that we were getting good looks. They just weren't falling for us. We finally got some to start falling in the second half and had a breakaway layup to cut it to four, but we weren't able to convert that opportunity."

Breanna Hall led all scorers with 26 points on 9-of-13 shooting. Chyna Ellis scored 15 points and pulled down 8 rebounds. Marquita Daniels scored 4 points and grabbed 3 rebounds, while Taylor Jenkins finished with 2 points and 5 rebounds.

"We've failed all year long to get that third scorer and we really needed that tonight," Fowler said. "Georgia State made a conscious effort to not let Marquita Daniels have another good night after she scored 37 in the first meeting at our place.

On Saturday, the Jaguars defeated the Georgia Southern Eagles 80-63. Marquita Daniels recorded 33 points, leading all scorput it all together out on the court," Fowler

Daniels, in addition to her 33 points, snagged 4 rebounds and dished out 4 assists. She shot 68.4% from the field and 50% from three point territory. In the second half, Daniels shot a remarkable 73.1%.

"Marquita just put us on her back," said South Alabama head coach Terry Fowler. She made some big plays with her and-one and then her three-point shooting. She was just amazing tonight. It was a great team effort tonight as well, especially at the defensive end of the floor. We really sank down and guarded well and for the most part controlled the boards until late in the game, but by then, we had the game pretty much in hand.

"Marquita was able to get us some easy transition baskets in the second half and [Georgia Southern] had a tough time handling the pick-and-roll with both Marquita and Breanna Hall. Colby Davis also had a game for us tonight like we know she's capable of having. It was really good to see us play the way we did tonight, especially in the second half."

Breanna Hall scored 20 points, grabbed 4 rebounds and handed out a pair of assists. Chyna Ellis recorded her fifth double-double of the season, with 10 points and 12 rebounds. Colby Davis finished with 9 points, 3

"Tonight was the first time that we're really said. "We shot 80 percent from the foul line, played pretty good defense and didn't turn

After the win, the Jags' record improved to 5-21 overall and 2-15 in Sun Belt Conference play. South's next game will be at home against the University of Louisiana-Monroe Warhawks. Tipoff is set for 5:05 P.M. on Thursday, February 26.



₩ANGUARD

Men's hoops loses twice in Georgia road trip

By AARON POIROUX **Sports Reporter**

The South Alabama men's basketball team dropped both of its games this week, losing to Georgia State on Thursday and Georgia Southern Saturday.

On Thursday, the Georgia State Panthers took down the Jaguars 79-51. South Alabama shot 29.3% and gave the ball away 17 times during the loss

"In the first half I thought we defended really well," said South Alabama head coach Matthew Graves. "We held them to under 40 percent shooting, and as you look through the stats, we got to the free-throw line six more times in the first half. The biggest difference was our execution; we turned the ball over way too much. In the first half, they took 10 more field goals than we did, and 18 more for the game. When you give a team as skilled as theirs that many more opportunities, it's a recipe for Jaguars scoring in double digits. disaster and that's what it ended up being to-

South shot only 20% in the second half, during which the Panthers outscored the Jags 43-23

"Unfortunately it got worse and it was frustrating because it was hard to get any flow to the game; it seemed like there was a whistle on both sides every minute, and it turned into an

Taishaun Johnson, the only Jaguar to score in double digits during the match, scored 19 points. Johnson also grabbed 6 rebounds and dished out 3 assists. Ken Williams scored 9 points and pulled down 3 rebounds, and Georgi Boyanov recorded 7 points and a pair of rebounds. Dionte Ferguson finished with 6 points and 3 rebounds, and Abdul Lewis had 5 points and 10 rebounds.

"It was a lack of execution" said Graves. "We had too many guys standing around and not enough guys cutting through and doing what we needed. That's what was really frustrating; we spent several days preparing and we failed to execute.

On Saturday, Abdul Lewis's double-double wasn't enough for the Jags to beat Georgia Southern, as the Eagles rallied for a 10-0 run toward the end of the second half to put the win out of reach for the South, despite five

"They made about four or five really tough plays down the stretch that really decided the game," said South Alabama head coach Matthew Graves. "We played well for 35-plus minutes. They had a free-throw offensive rebound that really hurt us, we turned it over and they hit a 3 in transition that made a big difference, and we forced up a couple of shots that we really didn't need to take at that time. Ultimately, execution game and unfortunately we got out- when you're playing a championship-level

team—they're top three in our league—you can't afford to make those mental mistakes down the stretch and expect to win on the

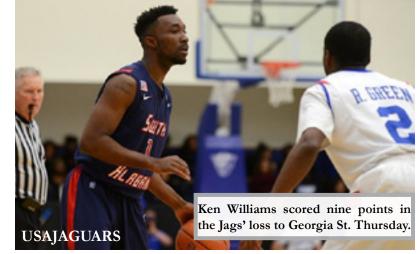
Lewis scored 17 points and grabbed 13 re-

"I was really proud of Abdul," Graves said. "He played a tremendous game. He got off to a little bit of a slow start, but after he picked up that second foul, he was much more assertive finishing at the rim. He just has to understand, when his motor runs like that, he can really produce. I was really happy with how he played; he had been struggling, so I'm really proud that he kept grinding, so hopefully that's momentum heading into next week."

Ken Williams led the Jaguars in scoring with 18 points. Williams also pulled down 6 rebounds. Taishaun Johnson recorded 14 points and 3 rebounds. Dionte Ferguson had 10 points and 5 rebounds, and John Brown finished with 10 points and 4 rebounds.

Georgia Southern shot 60.9% from the field and 50% from three in the second half, compared to South's 44% field goal shooting and 37.5% from deep. Overall, the Jaguars shot 43.1% from the field and 33.3% from three

The Jags, now 9-19 overall and 7-10 in conference play, will take the court again on Thursday, Feb. 26 at home against the Louisiana-Monroe Warhawks. Tipoff is set for 6:30 P.M.



Baseball falls to 4-3

added to the Razorbacks' lead with an RBI groundout. Arkansas added its third run of the inning on an RBI single by Bobby Wer-

Five different Razorbacks recorded RBIs. and Tyler Spoon went 3-for-5 with two doubles, an RBI and a run scored.

No. 22 UCF 7, USA 5

The Jags dropped their third straight game to a ranked opponent Sunday, losing to Central Florida 7-5 at Stanky Field.

USA (4-3) battled back from a 7-2 deficit in the ninth inning, but weren't able to tie

Robby Howell (2-0) recorded the win for the Knights (7-0), scattering seven hits over 6 1/3 innings and allowing just two runs. Trent Thompson earned the save after retiring the final two Jaguar batters.

Zach McMullen (0-1) gave up seven hits and two runs over five innings with five strikeouts for the loss.

Kyle Marsh got the Knights' offense going in the fourth inning, knocking a twoout RBI to center field to score JoMarcos Woods, but the Jaguars answered right back in the bottom of the frame on an RBI single by Cole Billingsley that sent Drew LaBounty

USA would then take a brief lead in the

bottom of the fourth inning on an RBI single by Ryan Raspino, but the Knights answered with two runs of their own in the fifth. Logan Heiser homered off of McMullen to tie the game, then Woods scored again on another RBI single by Marsh.

Erik Barber homered in the eighth for UCF to stretch the lead to 4-2, and the Knights scored three in the ninth to bring their total to seven

In the Jaguars' last frame, Cole Billingsley drew a bases-loaded walk to score Daniel Martinez and Cole Gleason hit an RBI single to cut the deficit to 7-4. Jared Barnes hit a sac fly to center field to bring the Jags within two runs, but that would be as close as they

Gleason finished the game 2-for-5 with a double and an RBI. Drew LaBounty was 2-for-3 with a walk and two runs scored for

Kyle Marsh was 2-for-4 for the Knights with three RBI. Woods was 2-for-3 with a double an RBI and three runs scored.

South Alabama travels to take on Alabama State Tuesday in Montgomery, Alabama at 6 p.m.

> SPORTS REPORTER AARON POIROUX CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE



must be eligible for service as a medical officer in the

must enroll or be enrolled in an approved residency

program for one of the Air Force Reserve's critical

Start your adventure today by calling 800-257-1212

or going to AFReserve.com/Stipend

Air Force Reserve