

Bulldogs Stone Eagles, Win SoCon Title

Written by SoCon Sports
Monday, 28 May 2012 06:17

Zeth Stone laced a two-out, bases clearing triple into the right field corner to clinch No. 4 seed Samford's first SoCon baseball championship in a 9-6, 10-inning triumph over No. 6 seed Georgia Southern at Fluor Field. Stone's game-

winner was the only hit of the final frame as the Bulldogs (39-21) loaded the bases with two outs by virtue of a hit batsman and a pair of walks. The Samford second baseman pulled the ball just over the outstretched glove of first baseman T.D. Davis and into the corner. Brandon Miller was hit by a pitch on a 3-2 count to open the frame, and Christiaan Durdaller and Tommy Corbin later reached via walks. Stone was 4-for-6 on the afternoon while driving in the final four Samford runs.

Samford was on the verge of wrapping up the title before Georgia Southern (33-27) rallied from a three-run deficit with two runs in the seventh and another in the ninth. Trailing 6-5 with three outs remaining, Brent Pugh sent a sacrifice fly to center field to score pinch runner Ben Morgan. C.K. Irby induced a ground out from Zac Lenns to end the threat. Irby pitched 4.0 innings of relief, including a perfect bottom of the 10th, to earn the victory and improve to 5-1 on the season. He surrendered one unearned run on two hits while fanning three, while also collecting two hits at the plate.

Samford jumped on GSU starter Chris Beck early with a pair of runs in each of the first two innings. Beck, who shut down Elon in the tournament opener on Wednesday and was the tournament most outstanding player a year ago, did not make it out of the second inning on Sunday. He surrendered four runs on five hits with three of Samford's four runs coming with two outs.

Trailing 4-1, Georgia Southern took advantage of an error to start the fifth inning. Davis delivered a run-scoring single to center, and after Michael Burruss grounded out to first, Chase Griffin raced home and slid under the tag to trim the Bulldogs' margin to 4-3.

In the top of the sixth, Samford's Durdaller battled through an 11-pitch at bat to rip an RBI single through the left side, scoring Miller. Durdaller then stole second and advanced to third on an errant throw. With two outs, Stone singled to bring Durdaller home and run the lead to 6-3.

Davis and Burruss each drove in runs in the seventh to bring the Eagles back to within one, setting up the dramatic final innings. GSU reliever Jarrett Leverett (4-2) worked two innings and was saddled with the loss after surrendering Stone's triple in the 10th.

Samford starter Josh Martin, the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, took a no-decision despite leaving with a three-run lead in the seventh. Martin went 6.0 innings, allowing five runs, three earned, on six hits. He struck out four while walking three.

Saxon Butler had two hits and two RBIs for Samford, while Burruss and Davis each drove in a pair for the Eagles. Samford will learn its destination in the NCAA Baseball Championship Monday afternoon on the selection show that airs at 12 p.m. ET/11 a.m. CT on ESPNU. Play begins Friday at 16 regional sites around the country.

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2012 SoCon All-Tournament Team

SP Justin Hess, Georgia Southern
SP Josh Martin, Samford
RP C.K. Irby, Samford
C Chase Griffin, Georgia Southern
1B Ryan Kinsella, Elon
2B Tyler Avera, Georgia Southern
2B Zeth Stone, Samford
SS Austin Allison, Samford
3B Chris Ohmstede, Furman
OF Taylor Johnson, Furman
OF Phillip Ervin, Samford
OF Brandon Miller, Samford
DH Garren Palmer, Georgia Southern

Tournament Most Outstanding Player, Walt Nadzak Award

Josh Martin, Samford

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Photo Courtesy: Josh Martin, SoCon Athletics