

Samford Blanks Mississippi State, Cougars Fall

Written by SoCon Sports
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Charles Basford pitched 8.0 shutout innings and the Samford offense hit four home runs to lift the third-seeded Bulldog baseball team to a 5-0 win over second-seeded Mississippi State in the first round of the NCAA Tallahassee Regional Friday afternoon at Dick Howser Stadium. "It obviously was a great outing by Charles (Basford)," Samford head coach Casey Dunn. "I thought the biggest thing

was he just stayed at the bottom of the strike zone. We feel like, when he is going good, he works down in the zone, and he did that really well today. I thought he did a great job of staying consistent."

With the win, Samford advances to Saturday night's winner's bracket game against the winner of Friday night's game between top-seeded Florida State and fourth-seeded UAB. The game will be televised live on ESPN2 and is scheduled for a 7 p.m. (ET) start. The win improved Samford's record to 40-21, giving the program its first-ever 40-win season and its first NCAA Tournament win. Mississippi State falls to 39-23 with the loss.

Basford, a Tallahassee native, struck out four batters and allowed just five hits in improving his record to 10-2 on the season. C.K. Irby, who hit one of Samford's four home runs, also pitched the final inning, allowing no hits and striking out one.

"We knew if we could go out there and play our game, it was going to be great for us," Basford said. "With the crowd and all of the hometown people at the game, it was definitely a big motivator for me."

Brandon Miller, Saxon Butler, Irby and Christiaan Durdaller each hit a home run in the win for Samford. Miller's homer was his nation-leading 23rd of the season, while Butler's was his 15th of the year. Irby was 3-for-4 with two RBI overall at the plate. Brad Moss, Butler, Miller and Durdaller had one hit each for Samford.

"Brandon got the home run early and then we finally got some balls to fall," Dunn said. "We got some balls up in the air and hit them out. It's a pretty good first day to open the tournament, that's for sure."

Mississippi State's Chris Stratton (11-2) pitched 7.2 innings, giving up four runs on six hits to take the loss for MSU. Stratton struck out four batters and walked four. Stratton gave up three of Samford's four home runs, after giving up just four homers in the entire regular season. For Mississippi State at the plate, Mitch Slauter went 2-for-4. Adam Frazier, Hunter Renfore and Wes Rea had one hit each for the Bulldogs.

Samford put its first run on the scoreboard in the top of the second inning. Miller hit an 0-2 pitch into the parking lot in left field for his nation-leading 23rd home run of the season to give Samford a 1-0 lead.

Mississippi State threatened to score, loading the bases with two outs in the bottom of the second inning. Basford, however, got Daryl Norris to pop up to end the threat. Neither team could score again until the top of the eighth inning when Samford struck for four runs to break the game open.

With one out in the eighth inning, Butler hit a home run to left field to make the score 2-0. With two outs in the inning, Miller walked and then Irby homered to center field for a 4-0 Samford lead. Durdaller then homered to left field to make the score 5-0. The four homers are the most

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Mississippi State has given up this season, and they are the second most Samford has hit this season. Samford hit five homers in a win over Alabama A&M on Feb. 21.

The shutout was the first by a Southern Conference team in an NCAA Regional since Western Carolina shut out Jacksonville in 2007. The shutout broke a streak of 34-straight NCAA Regional or Super Regional games in which Mississippi State had scored. In addition to the ESPN2 broadcast,

GAINESVILLE REGIONAL

#2 Georgia Tech 8, #3 College of Charleston 4

The Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets (37-24) won an 8-4 slugfest over the College of Charleston (37-21) in the opening game of the NCAA Gainesville Regional on Friday afternoon. The two teams combined for 24 hits, 12 runs and three home runs, mostly coming in the first two innings, as the ACC tournament champions built an early lead and kept the Cougars at bay. Georgia Tech's Jake Davies tallied four RBI, including a three-run homer in the first inning, while Brandon Thomas went 4-for-4 with a three-run homer in the second inning. Tech reliever Dusty Isaacs (6-4) pitched 5.1 innings of shutout ball to earn the victory. The Cougars were led by outfielders Marty Gantt and Brandon Murray. Recently selected as a Louisville Slugger Third Team All-American, Gantt went 2-for-4 with a two-run homer while Murray tallied three hits and two RBI.

In the last eight games, Murray has hit .538 (21-39) with 12 RBI, while Gantt has hit .395 (15-38) with nine RBI.

We played pretty good defensively, outside of the one error that allowed those four runs," head coach Monte Lee said. "You have to give Georgia Tech credit as they really swung the bat well. We had to try to play catch up after they hit those three-run homers, but I thought we swung the bats pretty well overall. Isaacs did a good job in relief and kept us down offensively. We just have to keep the other team down in the beginning of the game and we'll be OK."

All but one Cougar starter tallied a hit, while Jimmy Holton reached on an error and eventually came around to score. Although the Cougars outhit Georgia Tech, 13-11, College of Charleston stranded 11 runners over the course of the game. CofC starter Christian Powell (9-4) allowed seven hits and eight runs, only four earned, as he worked into the fourth inning before being relieved by Nick Osterman. Osterman and Jake Zokan finished the game and did not allow any

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more runs, while scattering four combined hits.

College of Charleston jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the top of the first as CofC tallied five singles, including an RBI hit from Murray that scored Gantt. Georgia Tech responded in the bottom of the first with a single and walk, followed by a three-run homer from Davies to right field to put the Yellow Jackets up 3-1.

The Cougars clawed right back in the top of the next frame as Holton led off the inning by reaching second on a throwing error that hit his helmet. Gantt then launched his 11th homer of the season to left center field, electrifying the CofC contingent and tying the game at three apiece. The game's offensive see-sawing continued in the bottom of the second inning when Mott Hyde led off with a single and Kyle Wren extended the inning with a two-out chopper in front of the plate that Holton mishandled. Sam Dove singled to center to score Hyde, and then Thomas homered to right field to put the Jackets up 7-3.

Both teams scored singular runs in the fourth inning, off RBI singles from CofC's Murray and GT's Davies, locking the score at 8-4. Both teams' pitching staffs and defenses locked down after the fourth, but the Cougars were unable to spark a comeback.

College of Charleston will continue in the double-elimination regional by facing off against the loser of Florida/Bethune-Cookman at 1 p.m. on Saturday on ESPN3.

Photo Courtesy: Charles Basford, SoCon Athletics □