

Toledo softball struggles in South Carolina tournament

The University of Toledo softball team struggled this past weekend in the Buffalo Wild Wings Classic. The Rockets dropped two games on Feb. 24: 3-0 to Sacred Heart University and 1-0 to Furman University. Feb. 25 was a better day for the midnight blue and gold, defeating Western Carolina 4-2 and losing 4-1 to USC-Upstate. UT falls to a 3-11 record on the season.

Hits were not plentiful for the Rockets versus the Sacred Heart Pioneers. Fourth-year infielder Chandler Rice, third-year infielder Samantha Showalter and second-year infielder Megan Choate collected the three hits against the Pioneers.

The Pioneers scored two of their runs off of an RBI double that was hit into left field in the second inning. Their other run was brought in by another double in the following inning.

Second-year pitcher Heather Webb (1-2) threw six innings, allowing three earned runs and striking out six. Five base runners were left stranded during her pitching.

UT's game against the Furman Paladins was a pitchers' duel. Third-year outfielders Marriah Wise and Ashley Rausch collected the only two Rocket hits. Furman scored their only run in the third inning off a Toledo error.

Second-year pitcher Kailey Minarchick (1-3) completed her first complete game of the season. Minarchick allowed four hits, struck out four and walked one batter.

"Our pitchers did very well today," said head coach Kristen Butler in a UTRockets interview. "Heather and Kailey performed very well and gave us great outings. We need to focus on executing when we have runners on base."

Saturday morning started off slow for the Rockets when Western Carolina jumped to a 2-0 lead in the first inning. First-year pitcher Alissa Noble came into game to replace Leah Allison, another first-year pitcher.

The midnight blue and gold was running on all cylinders from the third inning on. Chandler Rice, fourth-year second baseman, hit a two-run home run past left field in the third inning and brought in Wise, who reached base from a walk. Samantha Golden, first-year infielder, hit a double into left field and scored a run from Showalter's single in the following inning. The Rockets scored their final run in the fifth inning, when Rice scored off of a bunt from fourth-year catcher Ashley Maynard.

First-year pitcher Alissa Noble (1-3) struck out three in six innings and secured her first win for UT. Minarchick got the save, making it her second of the season when she replaced Noble in the seventh inning.

"We did a great job getting game one today," said Butler in a UTRockets interview. "Alissa and Kailey did a great job in the circle for us, and Chandler had a good day at the plate getting runs for us in both games."

Upstate responded with a solo home run in the first inning and a two-run home run in the following inning. The Spartans continued scoring in the fifth with an RBI single.

Heather Webb was the starting pitcher (1-3); she allowed four runs on six Spartan hits.

Next weekend, the Rockets will travel through five time zones to play in the Malinini Kipa Aloha Tournament (March 3-5) in Honolulu, Hawaii, hosted by the University of Hawaii.

UT will face Charleston Southern University at 3:30 p.m. to begin the Malinini Kipa Aloha tournament on Friday, March 3. The Rockets have a doubleheader the following day beginning at noon against Seattle University and at 4 p.m. against Hawaii. Sunday, March 5, as of now, is considered bracket play and TBD.

A couple of days following the tournament, while UT is on Spring Break, the Rockets will take on Hawaii in a non-tournament doubleheader on Tuesday, March 7 at 5 and 7 p.m.