

Braves sweep series of ranked teams

By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

In a clash of two nationally ranked teams, the Peach Belt Conference cross-divisional series between the UNCP baseball team and Georgia College on April 9 and 10 did not disappoint.

The No. 11 Braves took two close matchups in the series' opening doubleheader by scores of 4-2 and 4-3 before blowing out the visitors 10-0 in the finale, giving UNCP its seventh-straight 30-win season.

The three wins extended UNCP's winning streak to six games, while it was also the Braves first ever series sweep over No. 9 Georgia College.

Opening win

In the series opener, the Braves received a stellar pitching performance from senior Josh Bagley, who

held Georgia College to only three hits over 7-2/3 innings of work in UNCP's 4-2 win.

Senior Keith Whitman doubled and homered in a 2-for-4 performance, while fellow senior Jason Coker and junior Josh Haley each added 2-for-4 afternoons as well.

On the hill, Bagley struck out four batters in his performance to grab his fourth win of the season before redshirt junior Braxton Lewis finished the final four outs, with two coming via strikeout.

Georgia College scored in the top of the first inning, but UNCP answered right back with three runs in the bottom of the first, using back-to-back RBI doubles from Whitman and Coker.

Whitman blasted a two-out homer in the fifth to extend the lead before the Bobcats' RBI single in the eighth inning brought the

game to the final score.

Big homers

In the second game of the series, Whitman and Coker each belted homers, while UNCP senior pitcher Brad Isom earned his team-leading seventh win of the season.

Isom struck out three batters and scattered four hits over seven innings of work.

Coker finished 2-for-3 with the home run, while junior Brad Bridgeman had two singles as well.

Whitman's solo shot put him in prime company, as he tied former Brave Jason Morales for the most home runs all-time in UNCP history with 40 homers in his career.

Georgia College scored first, plating a run in the second inning, before UNCP responded with three runs in the bottom of the third inning highlighted by



Braves senior Keith Whitman celebrates with teammates tying the UNCP record for most career home runs on April 9.

Haley's RBI double and Whitman's home run.

In the fifth inning, Coker belted his own two-run homer to give the Braves insurance runs before Georgia College added two final runs with a homer of their own in the eighth inning.

Blowout finale

In the series' final game, the UNCP bats left no doubt

about the outcome of the contest, exploding for a 10-0 win.

The Braves knocked 15 hits over the afternoon as they saw senior Brian Willis turn in seven innings while striking out nine batters.

Coker finished 4-for-4 with a double and three singles while scoring three times to lead the Braves, while Haley homered as part of his three-hit day.

Mickens' walk-off double lifts Braves past Pfeiffer

By Akeem Deacon
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The UNCP baseball team used an 11th inning walk-off double by senior Kenny Mickens to escape an upset bid from visiting Pfeiffer on March 30, with the Braves grabbing a 5-4 victory at Sammy Cox Field.

The win kept the Braves unbeaten in non-conference play while also completing

the season sweep for the Black and Gold over Pfeiffer after UNCP won in Misenheimer, N.C., on Feb. 15 in another 11-inning affair.

Senior Joe Mangum matched a career-high with his 4-for-5 performance to pace the Braves, while junior Brad Bridgeman tallied a 3-for-4 hitting line and senior Keith Whitman added two hits as part of UNCP's 17th double-digit hitting game of the year.

Redshirt junior Braxton Lewis struck out three bat-

ters while allowing only two hits in three innings of relief work to grab his fourth win of the season.

The Braves registered lone runs in each of the first, second and fourth innings to capture a 3-0 lead, but Pfeiffer responded with a run in the sixth, as well as three more runs in the seventh, to take the late lead and set up the outcome.

Senior Jason Coker tied the game for the Braves in the bottom of the eighth, blasting a solo home run in what was his only hit of the night.

In the 11th inning, Pfeiffer found themselves with runners on first and third with one out only to see Lewis get a huge double play to end the inning and escape the jam.

In the bottom of the same frame, Pfeiffer retired the first two Braves hitters before issuing a full-count walk to junior Alex Pearce.

Pearce advanced to second base on a wild pitch with Coker at the plate before Coker was intentionally walked, setting up Mickens' game winner.

Braves win season sweep against Barton

By Akeem Deacon
Sports Writer

The UNCP baseball team took a comfortable 5-1 victory over Barton on April 6 to complete the season sweep. After tallying four runs in the first three innings, the Braves cruised to their 19th non-conference victory in a row.

The Braves outscored Barton 27-6 in their two meetings this season and now have a four-game winning streak against the Bulldogs.

Junior Eitan Maoz finished the game with two RBIs and scored once while enjoying a 2-for-2 night at the plate and freshman Brandon Huffman also performed well, knocking his second home run of the season as part of his two-RBI night.

Senior Keith Whitman and juniors Josh Haley and Aaron Parnell each reached base and scored throughout the game for the Braves as well.

UNCP redshirt junior Bryan Collins earned the win after striking out three batters and turning in three hitless innings, as five Braves took the mound in all.

Huffman, junior Brantley Hatrich, senior Tyler Wood and redshirt junior Braxton Lewis also all saw time on the hill and each picked up two or more strikeouts on the night.

Maoz's RBI single in the bottom of the first inning put the hosts on the scoreboard as Whitman scored, while Huffman's two-run shot in the second inning pushed the lead to 3-0.

Haley's RBI single in the third inning continued the scoring for the Braves, who saw their shutout broken up in the seventh inning when Barton's Jordan Smith had an RBI single.

Parnell scored on a wild pitch in the seventh inning to bring the contest to its 5-1 final score.



UNCP's Kenny Mickens connects with a pitch earlier this season. Mickens' walk-off double gave the Braves a 5-4 win over Pfeiffer.

Braves take PBC series over Armstrong Atlantic

By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

After falling in the series opener, the UNCP baseball team rallied back to take the final two games of a Peach Belt Conference series at Armstrong Atlantic on March 3 and 4 in a matchup that pitted two teams both ranked in the top-15 in the nation.

The series win was the 12th-ranked Braves fourth PBC series win of the season.

Armstrong Atlantic began the series ranked eighth in the country before falling to 11th before the final game of the series.

Opener

In the series' first game, the Braves found themselves victim to a gem of a pitching performance by Armstrong Atlantic's Chris Base. Base tossed eight innings while striking out five UNCP batters and scattering seven hits in the host's 6-1 win.

The Braves didn't help

themselves either; they left 12 runners on the base paths throughout the game, seven of whom were in scoring position.

Junior Aaron Parnell led UNCP at the plate, singling and doubling in four plate appearances as the only Brave to record multiple hits in the contest.

Senior pitcher Josh Bagley took the tough-luck loss, giving up four earned runs on five hits and five walks in 5-1/3 innings of work for the Braves.

UNCP's lone run came in the second inning, when they took a 1-0 lead when senior Jason Coker walked and came around to score, but the hosts responded with two runs in the bottom of the second inning before adding a run in the fifth and sixth inning and two final insurance runs in the seventh inning.

Bounceback

The Braves responded in game two, knocking 12 hits around the yard and scoring 10 runs to give sen-

ior Brad Isom more than enough support in their 10-1 win.

Senior Keith Whitman finished with three singles and also was hit by pitch twice to lead the offense, while fellow senior Joe Mangum had two RBIs in his 2-for-4 performance.

Isom tossed seven innings from the hill, allowing only six hits while striking out three to earn his sixth win of the year. He faced four or fewer batters in five of his seven innings of work.

The Braves jumped out to an early lead as they sent 10 batters to the plate in the top of the first inning en route to a 4-0 lead before they added three more runs in the fourth inning for a 7-0 lead for more than enough run support.

Finale

In the series' rubber game, the Braves got seven innings of shutout pitching from senior Brian Willis as they took home a 4-0 win in the finale.



Braves senior Joe Mangum applies a tag on a Coker runner earlier this season. Mangum tallied three hits and three RBIs in the Braves' series against Armstrong Atlantic March 3 and 4.

Junior Brad Bridgeman's RBI double in the second inning proved to be enough run support for Willis, as the Braves received nine of their 12 hits from the bottom five in the batting order.

Senior Kenny Mickens also scored in the second inning, coming home on a wild pitch, while Mangum's sacrifice fly in the fourth plated run three before Mickens' closed the scoring with an RBI single in the fifth.

Willis earned his fourth win of the season after spacing four Armstrong Atlantic hits over his seven innings of work.

Willis began and ended his day in the same fashion, retiring both the first and last six batters he faced in order.

Offensively, the Braves were led by junior J.J. Williams' 3-for-4 day, as well as receiving two hits from both Mickens and Bridgeman.