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# Seattle U Baseball Split Series with University of Oregon: Facing 94 mph Heaters

Tara King Goldman, Author

It had been almost a full year since the Seattle University Baseball team stepped back into the batter's box for a game. In their second series of the season, the team faced the most formidable pitching they will see this year from the University of Oregon. After losing the first two games, the Redhawks battled back to win the last two games and tie the Feb. 25-28 series. A series split is a big confidence boost early in the season for the team.

The Redhawks showed grit during a tough series. Seattle U Baseball Head Coach Donny Harrel attributed the series split to staying loose and being aggressive.

"I thought we played harder than they did. We had a little bit more of an edge to us, and it showed up by the end of the weekend," Harrel said.

Despite being the first game of the series, the Redhawks bats started out hot. In the first inning, redshirt senior first basemen Austin Lively led off with a single. Junior right fielder Matt Boissoneault hit an RBI double to make it a 1-0 lead. Mazzone had an RBI double in the fourth inning, extending the lead to 3-0. The Redhawks kept the lead and held Oregon scoreless until the ninth inning. However, the Ducks scored four runs in the bottom of the ninth with a walk-off single to win 4-3.

In the second game, the Redhawks lost 6-0. Junior center fielder Gavin Rork led off the game with a hit and another in the sixth inning. Sophomore Grant Heiser and Lively, both added hits in the seventh inning. Despite the hits, the Redhawks were unable to convert them to situational hitting with players on base.

Coach Harrel credited part of the turnaround to Assistant Coach Wes Long's emphasis on an aggressive strike zone approach. Maintaining an aggressive approach at the plate with a deep roster of high-velocity pitching was challenging. Senior catcher Justin Mazzone, sat out game two, however, came back in game three rested and contributed to the team's mentality and win.

"Not giving up and staying consistent with our approach and all the hard work we have been doing leading up to this season right now and staying confident," Mazzone said.

By the third game, the Redhawks' aggressive but relaxed approach was sustained through the bottom of the ninth, winning 4-2. Sophomore Nestor German, starting pitcher, earned the first win of his Seattle U career. Sophomore relief pitcher Peter Chronowski came in and got the save.

"I think our pitchers played really well and threw up a lot of 0's," Boissoneault said.



Redshirt senior Connor O'Brien, shortstop, had an RBI in the first inning. Boissoneault hit his first homer since the 2019 season in the fourth inning. Grant Heiser got an RBI in the sixth inning.

The bats came out in the fourth game of the series, giving the Redhawks a series split with Oregon in a final score of 8-4. In the fifth inning, the Redhawks took the lead, 4-1. Boissoneault had an RBI triple in the seventh which solidified the 8-4 win.

"We knew we could beat these guys. There wasn't a doubt in our mind that we were going to win the last two games," Rork said.

The consistent high-velocity pitches from Oregon are something that the Redhawks will not face again in their conference. The pitching included 84 mph sliders and 95 mph fastballs.

"We will see that occasionally, but not on a pitcher after pitcher basis. And it was right-handed and left-handed. It was pretty unique," Harrel said.

Seattle U is an experienced team with the majority of players in their junior and senior year. Experience has helped lead to wins against PAC-12 teams.

"We have a good culture on the team. We are staying relaxed, having fun and getting in our work," Boissoneault said.

Playing under COVID-19 restrictions has also brought the team closer. It gave them more time together because the protocols in place isolate the team.

"We have all clicked well, and that is going to help us win a lot of ball games," Rork said.

When the chips are down this team fights their way back. In their most recent series against Washington State University, they once again came back from two losses to win the third game 4-2, March 7th.

"The way we have performed so far, we can't wait to see our team progress. With our bats, our pitching and our team chemistry, we have a really great thing going, and we are not even at our best yet—be ready for that," Mazzone said.

After a three-away game series, the Redhawks return home to face two local PAC-12 teams, the University of Washington and Washington State University. Seattle U will open conference play March 19 against top-seeded Grand Canyon University.

Fans can live stream the games for free by going to the WAC digital network to watch on game day.