

UCF's bats come alive again as the Knights breeze by Bethune-Cookman

UCF continued its strong offensive performance through the first week of the season. The Knights added another 10-run performance in a win over BCU.

By **Timothy Briggs** - February 23, 2016

The UCF Knights played another sound offensive game Tuesday night against the Bethune-Cookman Wildcats as they cruised to a 12-7 victory at Jay Bergman field behind 12 hits, including a mammoth grand slam by Austin Griffin.

If there is one thing UCF has shown through four games is that it can hit.

"Everybody's buying in," Griffin said. "Our motto coming into the year was UCF: We Hit."

And UCF have done exactly that through the first four games of the season so far.

With 12 runs on Tuesday and 36 in the opening weekend series against the Siena Saints, the Knights have compiled 48 runs in four games. A very impressive total for a team with a ton of turnover, although perhaps the opponents are not the strongest UCF will see all year.

"Offensively we've done a terrific job," head coach Terry Rooney said. "The runs and the hits are obviously important, but it's really about the quality of the at-bats we're having."

In the weekend series against Siena, it was freshman Matthew Mika who received the accolades with an American Conference Player of the Week award. But on Tuesday, it was an onslaught in the middle of the UCF batting order that made Bethune-Cookman pay.

Griffin had his big blast in the bottom of the eighth inning to make what was a decently close 8-4 game into a bit of a laugher.

There was plenty of offense before that.

Sam Tolleson and Logan Heiser got the Knights started with RBI singles in the first, and then the Knights exploded for five runs in the third inning, with two runs coming on a Kam

Gelliinger single, one run on a Brennan Bozeman single and two runs coming on a Bethune-Cookman error.

Bethune-Cookman's sloppy play was a theme of the evening, with four runs coming as a direct result of mistakes, including the second UCF run scoring on a balk with the bases loaded.

Sophomore starting pitcher Andrew Deramo, who was making his first career collegiate start, was visibly nervous and his command was definitely off as he walked a batter and hit one in the first inning. But he was able to settle down nicely as he tossed 4 1/3 innings of three-run ball with only the one walk and four strikeouts.

"I think the key to success early on is that these guys are playing like a team," Rooney said. "It sounds like a cliché, but it's true. Everybody is doing what it takes to figure out how to win and find a way. There's lots of positivity, guys picking each other up. We'll just play one game at a time."

UCF has looked good offensively against teams with admittedly shoddy pitching. But the Knights' pitching has been pretty shaky too.

It is hard to expect double-digit runs in every game, especially as the schedule gets tougher and tougher, but it is a nice sign that this young and inexperienced UCF unit is winning soundly when the team can.

UCF is back in action on Wednesday night against the UNF Ospreys as the team looks to go 5-0.

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