

# Ohio State Baseball Drops First Three, Looks To Bounce Back In Jax College Baseball Classic



In the first series of the season against Arizona State, Ohio State dropped three games on the road, putting up a fight in each of the three. Despite the results, head coach Justin Haire didn't feel like the team came out of the weekend with anything other than confidence.

"I don't think they felt like they were overmatched," Haire said. "I think they felt like they were prepared. So we want to make sure we're praising that process of being prepared. Once you see how being so competitive and being so invested in the game puts you in a position to be successful when it comes to the last two or three innings, then you start to break through and notch some of those tight games in the win column."

The Buckeyes showed fight in all three games, losing the first two by just one run — the Saturday contest by a walk-off — but the biggest issue was getting length out of the starting pitching.

Haire expected that to be something he had to plan for due to it being so early and arms not being completely stretched out yet, but Friday starter Blaine Wynk and Sunday starter Jake Michalak combined to get just 15 outs over the weekend, forcing the first-year head coach to dig deep into his bullpen.

"We knew that there would be some young or inexperienced guys that would be put in big situations, a little baptism by fire for some of those guys," Haire said. "Some of them have responded well and some of them not so great, but we'll respond better the next time."

But Saturday was a different story for sophomore Chase Herrell, who was able to get through six innings of work, giving up four runs on a mistake pitch in the first inning, and just one hard hit ball in the sixth, along with a little luck for the Sun Devils.

“Chase Herrell, he carried himself like a professional, competed like a professional. He can really pitch and compete at a high level,” Haire said. “We just feel like he’s a guy, week in and week out, he’s going to give us a chance to win as long as we can hold up our end of the bargain on the offensive and defensive side.”

Ohio State was able to show off one of its big strengths over the weekend that it is going to be able to use to its advantage this year, which is the elite speed the Buckeyes boast throughout the starting nine.

Nick Giamarusti, Reggie Bussey and Trey Lipsey were moving gap-to-gap to cover the outfield grass, and Giamarusti showed off some aggression on the bases as well, to some great success. He stole five bases on five attempts — three in Game Two of the series — and made a big claim when he spoke with the media on Monday.

“I think we’re the fastest team in the country, so we have to play to our strengths,” Giamarusti said. “Coach always harps on causing chaos on the bases. That starts with me as well as a couple other guys on this team. Play to our strengths, and that gives us the best chance to win.”

Now the Buckeyes look to get into the win column in the Jax College Baseball Classic when they visit Bragan Field at Vystar Ballpark to take on No. 12 NC State on Friday, Coastal Carolina on Saturday and Alabama on Sunday.

“I know all three of those programs are going to be really well coached and really well prepared,” Haire said. “We’re going to do our best to make sure that our guys are ready for that fight and excited about getting down there, getting the opportunity to put the uniform on and go punch some of those big boys int the mouth.”