

## BAKER BASEBALL TEAM IN ARIZONA

## Hitting lets Baker down in Arizona

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker baseball players have been swinging at a lot of curveballs.

They're going to swing at many more in the next week.

Except these pitches will be thrown during practices rather than games.

The final two games of the Bulldogs' four-game trip to Arizona during spring break revealed a glaring weakness, coach Tim Smith said.

Baker managed just two hits in a 4-1 loss to Buena Vista, Colorado, on Wednesday, March 23, and three in a 4-2 loss to Apollo, Arizona.

And in both games, Smith said, the problem was the Bulldogs' inability to make contact with curveballs and other offspeed pitches.

"We didn't adjust," Smith said after Baker posted an 0-3-1 record during its Arizona trip, which resumed this spring after being canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

"It exposed some of our weaknesses."

Pitching, however, was not among them.

Smith said pitchers Silas Carter, Cody Skidgel, Connor Chastain and Logan Capon were "outstanding" in the losses to Buena Vista and Apollo.

The Bulldog hurlers gave up just two earned runs, and eight runs total.

That should give Baker a good chance at winning the two games, Smith said.

"We have to have more than two or three hits," he said.

The basic problem, Smith said, is that Baker hitters were too eager and looking for fastballs. They ended up lunging at pitches that were slower than they expected.

"We've been impatient at the plate," he said. "We're not mechanically where we need to be. That's going to be a focus this week."

Against Buena Vista, both of Baker's hits were doubles, one by Hudson Spike, one from Hayden Younger. Baker went scoreless through six innings, scoring its lone run in the top of the seventh, by which time Buena Vista led 4-1.

The Bulldogs had 15 strikeouts.

Smith said Baker batters never got in sync with Buena Vista's starting pitcher Caleb Camp. Smith said Camp relied mainly on curveballs that the Bulldogs mainly flailed at.

"Once you get into that groove it can be hard to get out of it," he said. "It's mental."

In the finale of the trip against Apollo, Baker tied the score at 2 with a pair of runs in the top of the fourth. But Apollo took the lead for good on a two-run homer in the bottom of the fourth.

Baker had six strikeouts compared

## Wednesday's Game

Baker	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	—	1
Buena Vista	0	0	1	0	3	0	x	—	4

Carter, Skidgel (6) and Logsdon. Camp, Mitchell (7) and Moss.  
2B: Spike, Younger.

## Thursday's Game

Baker	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	—	2
Apollo	1	1	0	2	0	0	x	—	4

Chastain, Capon (4) and Logsdon. Christian and Pacheco.

with 15 against Buena Vista, but only three hits. Cole Hester and Skidgel each had a double and an RBI.

Smith said he's confident that with more live pitching outdoors — the Bulldogs have mainly been confined to the batting cages since practice started on the last day of February — Baker will regain its confidence at the plate.

Baker has shown its potential already, scoring 18 runs in the second game of a doubleheader sweep of Heppner/Ione on March 17.

Baker, 3-3-1 overall, will play its home opener on Wednesday, March 30, against Homedale, Idaho. First pitch is set for 4 p.m. at the Baker Sports Complex.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

**Hudson Spike, shown here taking batting practice on March 15, 2022, had a double in Baker's 4-1 loss to Buena Vista, Colorado, on March 23, 2022, in Arizona.**

## NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT SWEET 16 ROUND

## Arkansas Razorbacks bounce top seed Gonzaga

BY JANIE MCCAULEY

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — For 40 frenzied minutes, JD Notae, Jaylin Williams and Arkansas played a maddening, muscular style on both ends that took Gonzaga out of its game — and right out of the NCAA Tournament far earlier than these Zags expected.

Notae scored 21 points despite missing 20 shots and the determined, fourth-seeded Razorbacks dashed the No. 1 overall seed Bulldogs' title hopes with a 74-68 win in the Sweet 16 on Thursday night, March 24.

"We've been disrespected the whole year, so it's just another thing for us," Williams said. "We saw everything they were saying, we felt like they were dancing before the game. That was disrespect for us. We just came into the game playing hard and we had a chip on our shoulder. Every game we do."

When the final buzzer sounded, Notae tossed the game ball into the air in triumph, while Williams flexed and roared near midcourt. Coach Eric Musselman made his way into the stands to find his mother, Kris, for a celebratory embrace after she watched her son in person for the first time coaching the Razorbacks.

After a throwback performance from the program that once promised "40 Minutes of Hell," these Hogs relished in pure bliss.

Notae finished with six rebounds, six assists, three steals and even swatted a pair of shots for the Razorbacks (28-8), who reached the Elite Eight for a second straight year and will face second-seeded Duke on Saturday, hoping to deny retiring coach Mike Krzyzewski one last trip to the Final Four.

Drew Timme scored 25 points but couldn't rally the normally high-scoring Bull-

dogs (28-4), who for the second straight season were favored to win that elusive national title but couldn't keep up with Arkansas' athleticism and fight. Gonzaga had been undefeated last year before losing to Baylor in the national title game.

"We just wanted to be physical, plain and simple," Musselman said. "We wanted them to feel bodies. Obviously they played a really tough schedule early in the season, but it's been a long time in conference play since they faced a team like us."

An emotional Timme addressed his teammates afterward, then fought tears during a postgame news conference.

"It was a hell of a ride," Timme said. "It didn't end up the way we wanted but we came to play hard. It was their night."

Arkansas continually challenged 7-foot freshman Chet Holmgren in the paint, and the lanky NBA prospect fouled out with 3:29 remaining. Holmgren

scored all 11 of his points after halftime and had 14 rebounds in what might have been his final college game.

Notae shot 9 of 29 overall and 2 for 12 from 3-point range yet still did a little bit of everything for Arkansas. The senior guard's 3 with 6:38 left made it 59-50, and the Razorbacks held on from there.

Au'Diese Toney's one-handed slam with 1 second left punctuated the victory.

Toney converted a three-point play with 8:36 left by going right at Holmgren to draw his fourth foul and send him to the bench. The big man returned at the 6:46 mark but Notae drove at him three minutes later and drew the freshman's fifth foul. Holmgren raised his arms in protest.

During one key sequence, Notae scored, then sneaked in from behind Timme for a steal as Williams held his ground on the block. Notae swatted an

early shot and made a steal to get his team going. He hit the floor repeatedly to corral loose balls.

"He kept the momentum our way," Trey Wade said.

Gonzaga trailed at the break for just the fifth time this season and never found the shooting touch that made the Zags the top scoring team in the nation at 87.8 points per game. The Zags shot 37.5% and went 5 of 21 from 3-point range. Andrew Nembhard was a non-factor with seven points on 2-of-11 shooting.

"It's always so tough when it finally ends, especially short of the goal we all had," coach Mark Few said. "First time we lost in this round in quite a while. All the credit goes to Arkansas. Their defense was tough to get any rhythm against. To me that was the difference in the game."

Williams took a charge late in the first half — his 45th of the

season — and drove through the lane for an emphatic dunk during a 9-0 run by Arkansas in which the Zags were 0 for 5 with three turnovers.

Williams had 15 points and 12 rebounds while Wade also scored 15.

## Bay Area Memory

Gonzaga's last two visits to the Bay Area have been forgettable. The Bulldogs' previous visit was still plenty fresh before Thursday — a 67-57 loss at rival Saint Mary's on Feb. 26 for their first defeat since Dec. 4.

## Facing No. 1

The Hogs earned their first ever win against a No. 1 team in the NCAA Tournament.

Arkansas had been 0-5 all-time against the nation's top-ranked team and 2-11 overall, with one of those wins coming this season. The Razorbacks beat then-No. 1 Auburn 76-73 in overtime on Feb. 8.

## Villanova returning to Elite Eight

BY JIM VERTUNO

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The Villanova Wildcats have made quite a second home for themselves in the Alamo City, where they won a national championship in 2018 and are carving a path toward another.

Jermaine Samuels scored 22 points, Collin Gillespie scored 12 and made a key 3-pointer late, and Villanova controlled Michigan in a 63-55 Sweet 16 victory on Thursday night, March 24, in the NCAA Tournament.

Samuels and Gillespie were freshmen in that title run a few years ago. Now, they are grizzled veterans and long-time starters who are still around because of the extra season of eligibility due to the pandemic.

They're also the driving force for second-seeded Villanova (28-7), which advanced to the South Region final. They'll play No. 5 seed Houston (32-5), which beat top seed Arizona 72-60. It's the deepest run in the tournament for Villanova since coach Jay Wright won the second of his

two national titles in 2018 — against Michigan.

Samuels' 8-of-13 shooting performance, much of it coming on tough drives through Michigan defenders and around Wolverines 7-foot-1 center Hunter Dickinson, carried a Wildcats offense that had long stretches of misfiring on 3-pointers.

Samuels battled Dickinson on both ends of the court, and challenged the big man every time he had the ball to divert shots or force outlet passes.

"I just wanted to stay mobile and move," Samuels said. "He's a phenomenal player, so he's going to get great looks at the basket. But that I have teammates behind me gave me all the confidence I needed."

The loss ends a turbulent season for the Wolverines (19-15) and coach Juwan Howard, whose team squeaked into the tournament field only to shine in the first two rounds. Howard was suspended for five games late in the season for hitting a Wisconsin assistant during a

postgame handshake line.

"We learned a lot (about who we are)," Howard said. "We always talk about Michigan being a family. We've been the most connected group this year because of the fact everyone has been supporting each other. When I walk away from this season, and I look back, there's no reason not to hold your head up high."

Villanova twice threatened to pull away in the second half, but the Wolverines matched Nova's 3-point shooting in spurts to hang around. Guard Eli Brooks kept rescuing Michigan with 3-pointers, making 3 of 5. One of Brooks' 3s, plus two free throws from Terrance Williams II, had the Wolverines within 54-50 with just over 3 minutes left.

Michigan had plenty of tournament experience to lean on. They had fought back from halftime deficits against Colorado State and Tennessee to make the Sweet 16 for the fifth consecutive year.

But after Dickinson, who

led the Wolverines with 15 points and 15 rebounds, missed near the basket, Samuels blew by him on the other end for a layup. Gillespie followed it with a 3-pointer — his fourth of the game — from the left wing to make it 59-50 with 1:52 to play.

That was the cushion the Wildcats needed, as Michigan closed within six points before Samuels made four three throws over the final 13 seconds to put it away.

Defensively, Villanova refused to yield space under the basket to Michigan's big man, who came in averaging 24 points in Michigan's two NCAA Tournament wins. Dickinson was 6 of 16 shooting.

"We asked a lot of (Samuels) on the defensive end guarding Dickinson a lot. And then on the offensive end, we're trying to move Dickinson around," Wright said. "Which it sounds good unless you're guy that's got to go. You're running around, setting screens, cutting to make him follow you ... He never wanted to come out."

## Houston knocks off No. 1 seed Arizona

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Houston coach Kelvin Sampson gritted his teeth and raised his arms before emphatically pounding his right fist into his left hand 11 times while celebrating with ecstatic Cougars fans who were not too far from home.

Another No. 1 seed is out, and Houston is one win away from playing in its second straight Final Four after leading throughout in a 72-60 victory over Arizona in an NCAA South Regional semifinal game Thursday night, March 24.

"I knew we were going to make them uncomfortable,

that's what we do," Sampson said. "Our team, we're a tough bunch. ... They're not afraid of anybody."

Jamal Sheard, a 19-year-old second-year guard, scored a career-high 21 points and experienced guard Tyler Edwards had 19 points with five 3-pointers. They both played 38 minutes after Taze Moore got in early foul trouble.

"We always feel like we're the toughest team out there and we play like that ... we can't be scared of anybody," Sheard said. "The energy was just electric. It was awesome to have that type of crowd here."

Consecutive layups by Dalen Terry got Arizona

within 64-58 with just over two minutes left. But Edwards, the transfer from Texas Tech who played in the 2019 national championship game for the Red Raiders, settled things for Houston with a 3 from the right wing.

The No. 5 seed Cougars (32-5) play second-seeded Villanova in the South Region final on Saturday, March 26, in San Antonio, about 200 miles from the Houston campus.

Terry had 17 points for Arizona (33-4), while Pac-12 player of the year Bennedict Mathurin had 15 and Christian Koloko 10.

"It was a tough game. There's a lot of things we

could have done better to win the game," Mathurin said. "I don't have a lot to say."

The American Athletic Conference champion Cougars became the second former Southwest Conference team to knock a No. 1 seed out of this NCAA Tournament in a matter of hours. Top overall seed Gonzaga lost 74-68 to Arkansas, which went to the SEC in 1991, five years before the SWC's final season.

These Cougars are much different than the ones Sampson took to the Final Four last year — their first since going three times in a row during the Phi Slama Jama era from 1982-84.

## Duke wins to keep Coach K's final season going

BY JOSH DUBOW

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Mike Krzyzewski has spent more than four decades at Duke telling his players what to do, with championship-level results.

With his Hall of Fame career in danger of coming to an end, Krzyzewski let his players dictate the game-closing defensive strategy of switching from an uncharacteristic zone defense into Duke's famous man-to-man.

The key defensive stops and two late baskets by Jeremy Roach moved Krzyzewski within one win of his record-setting 13th trip to the Final Four in his farewell season with a 78-73 win over Texas Tech on Thursday night, March 24.

Krzyzewski said the players came to him during a late timeout like a "Catholic boys' choir," asking in unison for the switch to man that led to three straight stops and turned the game in Duke's favor.

"With this team they're so young and they're still growing," Krzyzewski said. "Whenever they can own something, they're going to do it better than if we just run it. When they said that, I felt they're going to own it. They'll make it work, and that's probably more important than strategy during that time. So that's the way I looked at it."

Roach did the rest with two jumpers during a 7-0 run as the steady sophomore came through in the clutch for a second straight game to send second-seeded Duke (31-6) into an Elite Eight matchup against fourth-seeded Arkansas.

Paolo Banchemo led Duke with 22 points, Mark Williams scored 16 and Roach added 15

as the Blue Devils made their final eight shots from the field to hold off third-seeded Texas Tech (27-10) and give Coach K his record 100th NCAA Tournament victory.

"I would say all year in the biggest moments we've always stepped up, and there's no bigger moment than this," Banchemo said. "I don't know about these guys, but I've never played in a basketball game like that."

As compelling as the action on the court was in this taut West Region semifinal, the story of this Blue Devils run has surrounded the farewell tour of their Hall of Fame coach.

Krzyzewski announced last June he would retire after this season. After missing the tournament last year, Duke was back with a roster filled with NBA prospects and capable of delivering Krzyzewski his sixth title.

Duke played from behind for much of the first half but was much sharper offensively in the second half. Williams got free for three easy baskets early in the half to get the Blue Devils rolling.

Then the vocal Duke contingent on hand for the first NCAA Tournament games in San Francisco since 1939 made its presence known midway through the half when A.J. Griffin tied the game at 47 with his third 3-pointer and Banchemo followed with a jumper that gave Duke the lead.

But a Red Raiders team featuring four super seniors and five players with more than 120 career games didn't go away and the game stayed tight as Duke used the zone to negate Texas Tech's strength advantage.