

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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ARKANSAS TECH SOFTBALL FALLS TO FIFTH-RANKED VALDOSTA STATE IN GSC TOURNAMENT WINNER'S BRACKET SHOWDOWN, ENDS SEASON WITH SCHOOL-RECORD 42 WINS

SOUTHAVEN, Mississippi – Arkansas Tech Golden Suns Softball had to wait 24 hours to finally play its GSC Tournament winner's bracket match-up with fifth-ranked Valdosta State here on Sunday at the Greenbrook Softball Complex and Tech couldn't overcome back-to-home runs by the Lady Blazers in the bottom of the sixth inning to suffer a 5-3 loss to the regular season GSC East Division champions.

The teams attempted to play the winner's bracket match-up on Saturday evening at Delta State, but lightning and rain forced that game to be pushed back to Sunday. The winner of the Tech/VSU game would earn the league's automatic berth into this year's NCAA Division II Softball Tournament.

Following the conclusion of Sunday's winner's bracket game, the rest of the 2009 GSC Tournament was postponed due to the threat of continued rainfall in the Southaven area on Sunday. With the conclusion of the tournament, VSU won its third GSC Championship and its first since 2002 and Tech earned its second consecutive GSC Tournament runner-up finish.

"What a tremendous season we had this year, despite the outcome of today's game," Tech Coach **Gidget Pambianchi** said. "We had our chances today. Give credit to VSU, they hit two incredible home runs, but they've been doing that all season.

"But I really proud of this year and all we accomplished this season."

In Sunday's game, Tech, who finished with a school-record 42 victories and posted an overall record of 42-21, took a 1-0 lead in the fourth inning on a solo home run to left center by sophomore first baseman **Tiphani Moon** (Eules, Texas). The homer was Moon's 10th of the season and 17th of her Tech career.

Tech took advantage of some sloppy defense by the Lady Blazers in the top of the fifth inning to take a 3-0 lead. In the inning, Tech used two errors by VSU to score two unearned runs. Senior rightfielder **Sarah Pratt** (Garland, Texas) drove in the first run with her RBI single up the middle and the second run came in on a throwing error by VSU third baseman Andi Braswell, which plated senior centerfielder **Krista Cifuentes** (Clinton, Ark.).

The Lady Blazers cut into Tech's lead in the bottom of the fifth inning on a solo home run to left center by April Hutchens off of junior hurler **Casey Hammons** (Carthage, Texas). Hutchens' homer snapped a 16-inning scoreless streak by Hammons in the GSC Tournament.

In the sixth, VSU (54-6 on the season) took the lead with two outs thanks to a three-run homer by Stephanie Carlson. Carlson's homer came after Hammons walked two of the first three batters she faced in the inning. Rebecca Aszman followed up Carlson's homer with a solo home run over the left field fence to give the Lady Blazers a 5-3 advantage.

Tech brought the tying run to the plate in the form of Moon in the top of the seventh with two outs after sophomore second baseman **Shanda Jameson** (Mansfield, Texas) reached on an infield single to VSU pitcher Brianna Collis, but Collis ended the game by forcing Moon to line out to second base to end the game.

Hammons (21-7) took the loss as she pitched six innings and allowed five hits and five runs, while walking three and fanning four.

Collis (14-1) earned the win in relief of Holly Satterfield as she tossed 2.2 innings and allowed two hits and no runs, while striking out three. Satterfield pitched 4.1 innings and allowed two hits and three runs (one earned run), while walking two and striking out four.

Pratt, Jameson, Moon and redshirt freshman **Trish Bliss** (Lafayette, La.) each picked up a hit in the game. Carlson went 2-for-3 at the plate for VSU with three RBIs in the win.

The game marked the final one for Tech's three-member senior class of Pratt, Cifuentes and leftfielder **Kacie Visina** (Rowlett, Texas). Those three seniors led Tech to 83 wins and back-to-back GSC West Division titles the past two seasons. Pratt leaves Tech as the school's all-time record holder in career batting average (.363), hits (213), runs scored (103) and triples (16), while Cifuentes holds the school's record for career games played with 213.

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