

# Softball Working Through Challenging Early Schedule



Of the eight games Ohio State softball has played to open the season thus far, six have been against opponents that received votes in the latest ESPN.com/USA Softball top 25 poll.

“Our schedule is very competitive early, so we’re going to be able to see who’s going to rise to the competition level early,” head coach Kelly Kovach Schoenly told The Lantern before the season. “I think that’ll help us face the music and figure out how we’re going to have our energy and our fluids together.”

The Buckeyes opened their season with an 11-4 loss against No. 10 Georgia in Orlando, responded with an 8-2 win over Boise State in the same city, then lost 1-0 to No. 20 UCF. A 1-0 win against UMass closed their time in Florida.

“We came out of the gate strong with Georgia,” senior outfielder Tegan Cortelletti said. “Last year we had a couple of games to get acclimated and get ready for the season.”

OSU then played a pair of two-game series on Clemson’s campus in South Carolina, both against teams who at least received votes in the above-mentioned poll. They split a pair of contests with Notre Dame, who would be ranked 30th if the rankings extended that far, and lost two contests by a combined 15-1 tally to No. 6 Clemson.

A few players have shown signs of “rising to the competition,” as Schoenly put it above.

Through eight games and 24 total at-bats, sophomore infielder Kami Kortokrax is well beyond the next-best hitter in terms of batting average for the Buckeyes, posting a .375 at the dish. No other player currently breaks the .300 mark. Sophomore outfielder Melina Wilkinson leads the team in RBI with six, adding a .292 batting average.

Overall, however, the Buckeyes are 12th in the Big Ten with a .234 batting average as a team. They are the only team in the conference who has yet to have a player hit a home run.

In the circle, pitcher Allison Smith has a team-best 3.84 ERA and 31 strikeouts in a team-high 27.1 innings pitched.

Still, OSU will be looking to improve upon their 3-5 record before conference play opens. Following a bout with Cal State Northridge, the Buckeyes will play three consecutive contests against teams who received votes in the USA Softball poll in Palm Springs, Calif. The lineup features Oregon State, San Diego State and Utah.